"I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!"

THE MICHAEL POWELL and EMERIC PRESSBURGER FILM.

ERIC BRITTON.

BOOK OF THE FILM

2/-

INTRODUCTION

AT the beginning of the film script of "*I Know Where I'm Going!*", kindly lent to the author of this book by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, appear the following lines by the sixteenth-century English dramatist and poet Christopher Marlowe.

> It lies not in our power to love, or hate,
> For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.
> When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
> We wish that one should lose, the other win;
> And one especially do we affect
> Of two gold ingots, like in each respect.
> The reason no man knows; let it suffice,
> What we behold is censured with our eyes.
> Where both deliberate, the love is slight;
> Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?

These lines, then, inspired the film, and "*I Know Where I'm Going!*" is a story of love at first sight.

Joan Webster, an attractive girl who has carefully planned the lines upon which she intends her life to develop, has brought those plans to the verge of success by becoming engaged to the very rich head of Consolidated Chemical Industries, a man for whom she feels great affection and respect, if not love.

The wedding is to take place on the little island of Kiloran off the Scottish coast, and in high spirits Joan makes the long journey to meet her fiancé there. But when in sight of her destination bad weather holds her up and she is compelled to spend several days on the Isle of Mull in the company of Torquil Macneil, the impoverished Laird of Kiloran.

These are fatal days for Joan when the growing realisation of the true love that has come to her battles with the ambition of years.

This tender film, set in the lovely surroundings of the Western Isles, contains two especially outstanding scenes—the terrible fight with the storm when Joan makes a last desperate effort to get to Kiloran, and the sequences in which a Scottish Ceilidh (or Highland musical party) is filmed for the first time.

On the train to Scotland Joan unpacks her wedding-gown.

A PRODUCTION OF THE ARCHERS

"I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING!"

THE BOOK OF THE FILM

by

ERIC BRITTON

ADAPTED FROM THE FILM WRITTEN
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY
MICHAEL POWELL AND EMERIC PRESSBURGER

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CHARACTERS

Joan Webster	WENDY HILLER
Torquil Macneil	ROGER LIVESEY
Catriona Maclaine	PAMELA BROWN
Mr. Webster	GEORGE CARNEY
Hunter	WALTER HUDD
Captain of the "Loch Nevis"	CAPT. DUNCAN MACKECHNIE
Iain	IAN SADLER
Ruairidh Mor	FINLAY CURRIE
Kenny	MURDO MORRISON
Bridie	MARGOT FITZSIMONS
Colonel Barnstaple	CAPT. C. W. R. KNIGHT, F.Z.S.
Shepherd	DONALD STRACHAN
Old Shepherd	JOHN RAE
His son	DUNCAN MACINTYRE
Postmistress	JEAN CADELL
Peigi	IVY MILTON
Hooper	ANTHONY EUSTREL
Cheril	PETULA CLARK
Martin	ALEC FAVERSHAM
Mrs. Robinson	CATHERINE LACEY
Mr. Robinson	VALENTINE DYALL
Mrs. Rebecca Crozier	NANCY PRICE
Mr. Campbell	HERBERT LOMAS
John Campbell	JOHN LAURIE
Mrs. Campbell	KITTY KIRWAN
R.A.F. Sergeant	GRAHAM MOFFAT
Singers in the Ceilidh	BOYD STEVEN, MAXWELL KENNEDY, JEAN HOUSTON
Harmonica player	ARTHUR CHESNEY
Torquil the eagle	MR. RAMSHAW

Members of the Glasgow Orpheus Choir, under the direction of Sir Hugh Roberton.

CHAPTER ONE

NOISY as it was outside—what with whistles blowing, trains panting like tired animals, and all the activity of a railway station—the clamour inside the hotel seemed even more intense as Joan Webster passed through the revolving doors into the entrance hall. For this was a different, a more compact unquiet, made up of the close proximity of many human beings indulging in a multitude of conversations, and helped by the strains of a dance band in the background. Where the spaciousness of the station allowed some freedom for the sound to travel out and away, in the hotel everything was concentrated and confined like the explosive in a shell.

But for Joan Webster the somewhat hectic atmosphere was quite a normal one, for she had cultivated this kind of smart life so deliberately that she could no longer distinguish it from reality, nor wished to do so. She was an attractive girl of about twenty, with clear, widely spaced eyes and a deep upper lip. Her hair was a crop of short curls, light brown and slightly boyish looking. There was strength in her face, accentuated by high cheekbones, but this quality was marred to some extent by too much determination, too set an object in life. At this moment there was about her the air of having brought that object near to a successful conclusion. She was dressed smartly in a beautifully cut dark grey suit of fine tweed. A hat and bag of ocelot fur set off the plainness of the suit.

As she stood for a moment near the reception desk looking around her, the air seemed full of voices—English, American, Dominion and the local dialect. The reception clerk was answering the telephone in the last of these—broad Warwickshire.

"Yes, this is the Station Hotel . . . You'll have to speak louder, I can't hear a word. That's better . . . Yes, I can hear you now . . . No rooms at all. No, you can't have the bridal suite, there's a waiting list of Americans . . . Sorry . . ."

Joan smiled and threaded her way through the crowd to the adjoining lounge. It was a large room and crowded as only an English provincial hotel in 1945 could be crowded, with recognisable types—local business men and their wives, British and American service men with their girls, the usual sprinkling of unattached young men seeking sympathetic feminine company. Some of these young men glanced hopefully at Joan's slim, well-groomed figure as it crossed the lounge, but their expressions changed as she approached a middle-aged man who was sitting quietly in a corner at a small table.

His whole appearance was one of extreme respectability. He had only recently arrived and already he looked more than ready to leave. On a chair beside him were his hat and umbrella, and he was register-

ing a detached disapproval as he glanced about him. Joan was almost up to him before he saw her.

"Hullo, darling," she said with her sweetest smile. Bending down she kissed him on the cheek and then sat in the chair opposite him. He was relieved to see her.

"I got your telegram," he said. "I thought you'd be spending your holiday at home."

Joan shook her head. "Sorry, Daddy. You see me nearly every weekend. Did you bring my money?"

Mr. Webster pulled an envelope from his inside pocket.

"Here it is. Forty-seven pounds ten and nine. Sign this receipt and count the money."

Opening her handbag, Joan thrust the money in without even glancing at it, an unbusinesslike act that was not lost upon her father. He handed her a fountain pen and she signed the receipt.

"You don't mind my drawing it all out?" Joan asked.

"It's your own money. As your bank manager I would prefer you to leave some amount, however small, to keep the account open. As your father I would . . ."

He became aware of a waiter standing expectantly at his side, and waved him away.

"Nothing for me, thank you."

But Joan intervened. "You must have something to-night. He'll have some sherry," she informed the waiter.

"All right," her father concurred without enthusiasm.

The waiter smiled. "And the usual for you, Miss Webster?"

Joan nodded and the waiter went to fetch the order. Mr. Webster frowned. "What did he mean by 'the usual'?"

"He meant a gin-and-dubonnet," Joan said brightly, showing off a little. Her father looked more despondent than ever.

"You have no consideration whatever for my position."

"But darling, be reasonable. Look at all these girls. They all have fathers who have positions . . ."

"Not everybody's father is a bank manager."

He looks exactly like a bank manager, she thought. The lined, precise face, the glasses a little too low on the nose, the reserved dark suit and starched collar, the gold watch-chain—all were too utterly true to type. She took a deep breath. This was the sort of thing from which she was striving to escape. Not precisely from her father, but from what he now permitted himself to represent.

The waiter brought the drinks and she signed the bill. Mr. Webster witnessed unhappily this evidence of her influence in the place, which could only be the result of habitual attendance. Girls went off on their own nowadays, leaving the family circle and it was impossible to keep an eye on them.

"Darling," Joan said, determined that nothing should mar this particular evening. "Forget for an hour that you're a bank manager. Just be my father to-night."

"Now look here, Joan," he replied plaintively. "I've come all the

way from Little Brinklow. You know I don't like being seen in expensive places like this . . . and you know what my clients would think if they saw me here . . ."

Joan wasn't listening. She was staring at the third finger of her left hand.

"Daddy," she said suddenly, and the suppressed excitement in her voice caused him to look enquiringly at her. "I'm going to get married."

Before he could digest this, the maitre d'hotel was bowing over them. "Your table, Miss Webster."

"Oh, thank you, Luigi." Joan stood up. "Let's go in, Daddy. Bring your drink."

"Go in? Where?"

But Joan was already following the maître d'hotel and there was nothing to do but emulate her. Robbed apparently of all freedom of action, he hurried after his daughter, his glass clutched in one hand. People got in the way and almost upset his sherry, and he had to clutch frantically at his hat and umbrella, but at last they were through and into the restaurant. Here there was a small dance floor and a band which was playing a foxtrot. The soup was already being served as they arrived at their table.

"I ordered dinner," Joan said. "I know what you like."

While the maître d'hotel opened a bottle of white wine with an excess of showmanship, Mr. Webster stared anxiously at his daughter. She nodded to him.

"Yes, darling. I'm going to get married. There's the proof."

She extended her left hand for examination. Her father peered doubtfully at the ring. "Hm! Diamond! Who is he?"

He was thinking, too, that it was a very large diamond!

Joan opened her bag, took out a printed card and, with a flourish, presented it to her father. He examined it in some bewilderment. It was made out to "Joan Webster—Analytical Chemist."

"This is your Works' Pass, isn't it? At the C.C.I."

"Yes. His name's printed on it."

"But you can't marry Consolidated Chemical Industries."

"Can't I?" Joan said, airily.

Mr. Webster turned the card over several times without getting any further enlightenment.

"There's no name on here, except your own and . . ." A sudden, staggering thought occurred to him. Under the name of the firm was printed in small letters: "Chairman—Sir Robert Bellinger."

He glanced up at her in astonishment. "You can't mean . . ."

Joan could hardly contain her pleasure at the sensation she was causing. She nodded deliberately.

"Yes, I do, darling. It's exactly what I do mean."

"But . . . Robert Bellinger's one of the wealthiest men in England."

"He won't be any poorer by marrying me."

Mr. Webster digested this unexpected answer for a while. He didn't know what to think, except that the whole matter seemed

vaguely undesirable. This was summed up in the next question: "How could a girl like you meet a man like him?"

Joan laughed gaily. "Not in the Lab. I was working for Robert years before I met him. It was here. I came with some people who knew him. We got talking and . . . You don't object, Daddy?"

He shook his head for, in truth, what was there to object to? He couldn't put into words this vague discomfort he felt. Perhaps it was only an old-fashioned idea that people should keep to their stations in life. Taking her hand, he said: "May I ask you what your mother would have asked you?"

"Of course, Daddy."

He regarded her earnestly. "Do you love him?"

"Oh, darling," Joan exclaimed, disconcerted for a second. "Don't get the wrong impression. I know just what you're thinking. You believe in saving, and I believe in spending. We've quarrelled often enough over that. But I wouldn't marry a man only for his money . . . Oh, Daddy, aren't you thrilled? I am! Why a million girls would like to be in my shoes! But not a chance. I'm in them!"

He was astonished at the pugnacity in her manner, the apparent ruthlessness. Always she had been a girl with a will of her own, but there was the air of a successful amazon about her now. It was pleasantly allied to a gay and carefree façade, but it was nevertheless there.

He remained silent for some time, turning these bewildering events over in his mind, and mechanically eating his dinner. From photographs he had seen in the papers he could remember a little of what Sir Robert Bellinger looked like.

"He must be nearly as old as I am," he said, suddenly.

Joan paused in the act of raising her fork to her mouth. For a moment her face set and the gay manner vanished. Her father had not meant the remark as a criticism but rather as a personal comment to himself. But it pierced her defences and called for a special effort on her part to restore the balance of her confidence. Almost at once she had laughed it off.

"And what's wrong with you? Come on, let's dance."

The dance band had begun a waltz. Joan jumped up and seized his hand, pulling him after her. He expostulated. "Oh, no, Joan! Please!"

"Oh, yes! You can waltz. You taught me to waltz."

Seeing now that the public disturbance he would cause by opposing her would be more embarrassing than to dance, he allowed himself to be led to the dance floor. Once embarked on the waltz, his diffidence went and he quickly regained the old skill as a dancer that had characterised his youth. He began to enjoy himself and to relax a little.

Joan explained that she was leaving that night for Scotland where the marriage was to take place.

"You'll come with me to Rugby?" she asked. "I'm picking up the Scotch Express there."

"Are you going to Glasgow?"

"Further," she said happily. "The Western Isles."

They danced on while her father ruminated over this. Everything seemed very definite and prearranged.

"Have you got your ticket?" he asked. "There's bound to be a queue."

Joan nodded dreamily. "It's all arranged. Everything's arranged." It was clear that she was steeping herself in these first advantages of riches and influence. "I'm going to an island called Kiloran."

"Where is it?"

"Out in the west." Joan's voice, too, took on a dream quality. "It takes a night and a day to get there. It's his island, he's there already. That's where we're going to be married, away from everybody."

"Have you ever been there?"

"Often . . . in my dreams. And he's told me about it. There's an old house . . . golden sands . . . the Sands of Kiloran . . . and sheep and birds and grey Atlantic seals . . ."

She closed her eyes and gave herself up to the dance. Her father asked no more questions. There was nothing more to be said. Everything had been arranged. The omnipotence of Consolidated Chemical Industries left insignificant bank managers no contribution to make even to the future of their own daughters.

When the dance was over it was time to leave. Joan collected her luggage, which she had deposited in the hotel earlier in the day, and they caught the Rugby train. An awkward silence fell upon them both. They sat in opposite corners and occasionally Mr. Webster stole a glance at his daughter. She seemed to be fast moving away from him, and not only in the physical sense of the long journey ahead. There was a sadness inside him and he felt none of the pride he had expected to feel when his little girl got married. The fact was that she appeared anything but a little girl now. He was quite appalled by her self-confidence.

On the Main Line Station they were met by Sir Robert Bellinger's butler, Hunter. He had a long, white, mask-like face that could just manage to break into a respectful smile when required. Removing his bowler-hat, he received Joan with solemn politeness and conducted her to the reserved sleeper-cabin. A porter had already been secured to attend to the luggage. Hunter gave explicit instructions for the placing of the bags, taking charge of the arrangements with all the calm of authority and experience. An attendant stood by, ready to carry out his instructions and earn the lavish tip he had received for catering to Joan's every wish.

When everything was completed, Hunter said: "I hope you'll be quite comfortable, Miss. I took care not to let them put you over the wheel."

"It's beautiful, Hunter," Joan said.

The attendant stepped forward. "Tea in the morning, Miss Webster?"

"Yes, please."

"We get in at 6.30. If I call you half-an-hour before, will that be all right?"

"Yes, thank you. It was very clever of you to get a sleeper, Hunter."

"Sir Robert's orders, Miss," he replied, as though that settled the matter, as in fact it did.

"Not so easy these days all the same," Mr. Webster commented. It was the first thing he had thought of to say since he had entered this impressive world of power.

"We have our methods, sir," Hunter said, with grave courtesy. He produced a large and impressive envelope, bulging with papers. "Here is the itinerary I have prepared for you, Miss, at Sir Robert's desire. Will you be good enough to study it? You will see that at Glasgow you change to Buchanan Street Station. Mr. McAllister, a director of the Bellinger Metal Works, will meet you on your arrival at the Central. You arrive at Oban, in Argyllshire, at 11.30. At Oban . . ."

Probably he would have gone through the entire itinerary had not a great slamming of doors and blowing of whistles announced the train's imminent departure. He and Mr. Webster hastily left the compartment, while Joan crossed to the small window and opened it as her father appeared on the platform

"Good-bye, Daddy darling. I'll be back in a week. Send me a wire. Hunter will give you the address."

"Good-bye, my dear. God bless you!"

"Good-bye, Hunter."

"Good-bye, Miss. And my very best wishes for your future happiness."

The train began to move. Mr. Webster took a few steps with it. His face was full of anxiety and Joan was touched. As he passed from her sight she called: "Don't worry about me, darling. I know where I'm going!"

The train gathered speed and she closed the window.

CHAPTER TWO

DESPITE her apparent confidence, Joan's feelings were very much those of an excited little girl who suddenly sees many wonderful toys spread out before her. There was a fairy-tale quality about this marriage of hers; not a fairy-tale about a handsome Prince Charming, perhaps, but the kind that tells of success and untold riches. Now her future was assured and a wonderful life opened out before her. She had considerable affection and a deep respect for the man she was going to marry. She had spoken truly when telling her father that she would not just marry for money. But she could not have said to what extent Sir Robert's power and fortune made him a suitable object for her affections. Such things cannot be assessed.

Alone now in this delightfully compact and modern little sleeping-cabin, the last word in luxury travel, she tried out all the attractive gadgets—light switches, collapsible shelves, built-in cupboards, air-regulators, chromium fittings—like a delighted child in a new world. Then she opened one of her travelling bags and reverently took out her wedding-dress, a dazzling creation in white satin, carefully packed in a long cellophane holder. Handling it with great care, she hung it up on a rail by the ceiling, stepping back a few moments to admire it before continuing to unpack the things she would need for the night.

When all had been done she lit a cigarette and settled down on the bed to examine the itinerary. It was a remarkable document that left nothing to chance. With it was a map, so that she might follow every stage of her journey. She sighed with pleasure as she looked at it. This was certainly the way to travel.

In order to be as fresh as possible for the long journey on the morrow, she retired early, but lay awake for a long time, her excited brain refusing to be subdued by sleep. When at last she did lose consciousness, distorted fantasies of her waking thoughts appeared in her dreams. As the powerful express raced to the north-west, leaving the Midlands behind, taking Lancashire in its stride, and confidently launching itself across the Westmorland hills, the rhythmic throb of the metal wheels seemed to blend with an old song she had heard as a child, a song that was perhaps a residue of her last words to her father.

"I know where I'm going,
And I know who goes with me,
I know whom I love,
But the de'il knows who I'll marry . . ."

So the wheels sang to her and it all seemed eminently reasonable that they should do so. The dream changed and she was at a fantastic marriage ceremony, clad in her lovely wedding-dress. A giant figure in a white surplice was booming out great sentences. "Do you, Joan Webster, take Consolidated Chemical Industries to be your lawful wedded husband . . .?" She only just had time to make the response before he continued: "And do you, Consolidated Chemical Industries, take Joan Webster . . .?" She found herself giggling, although she was not sure why, and the dream faded.

The train rushed on, passed the waters of the Solway, and entered Scotland, flashing like a noisy phosphorescent snake through the station of Gretna Green. As it crossed the Lowlands of Scotland, the sun came up out of the earth and flung long shadows over the hills. On and on, with an insatiable greed for the north, and attended now by its parasite shadow, the great beast tore its way forward, and finally, snorting with triumphant achievement, drew slowly into Glasgow Central.

Joan had not consciously heard the attendant's call a half-an-hour earlier, although her brain had supplied an automatic answer that had

satisfied him. But now he returned, tapped on the door, and called "Glasgow Central, Miss Webster."

She awoke with a great start, aware in a moment that she had overslept, that she must hurry. A wild scramble followed, but at last she was ready. Stepping out on to the platform, she was met by the Station-Master and a very solid Glasgow business man who raised his hat, revealing an almost bald head, and said in a rich Scottish accent: "Miss Webster? My name is McAllister. It's a grand day. Ye'll need all your time to get to Buchanan Street."

Both men beamed at her. It was five minutes past seven and they had been waiting there since six o'clock, but it would not have occurred to them to feel impatient about Sir Robert Bellinger's bride. A car was waiting and this quickly transported her to Buchanan Street, where they saw her safely installed in a first-class reserved seat on the train that would take her to Oban.

From then on the journey became one of ever increasing beauty. Joan stared out of the window entranced. Steeper gradients told her that she was passing from the Lowlands to the Highlands where there was also a gradual change in the colour of the countryside and especially of the hills which began to grow taller and to surround themselves with a carpet of heather. Fantastic lochs and mountains appeared, under a coldly blue sky.

Many thoughts came to Joan as she sat there through the long hours, thoughts of her future, of the good-byes she had said to her fellow-workers and the new respect they had shown her, of her father and her childhood and her dead mother. And sometimes she thought of her future husband, but not very often because in some curious way his image always slipped away again in a few moments as though he were a symbol rather than a person. Occasionally she imagined Robert making love to her, and it was not an unpleasant idea, but a disconcertingly unreal one that fled almost as soon as it had arrived.

The train reached Oban at 11.30. Here she was again met at the station, and conducted to the pier. Joan stared in awe at the lovely Bay of Oban with its magnificent natural setting among the hills of Lorne. The M.S. *Loch Nevis*, a trim, grey steamer, was waiting to take her to Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. Joan was handed over to the Purser who took her up on the bridge and introduced her to the Captain, a Highlander.

"Miss Webster?" he said in a dialect that was as different again from the one she had heard in Glasgow. "Yess-yess! I had a letter about you from Mr. Leith. It iss your first visit to the Isles? You have a suplime day . . ."

Joan glanced up at the now overcast sky and decided that "sublime" was an extravagance. The *Loch Nevis* put off at once, crossing the Firth of Lorne and heading for the Sound of Mull. Soon it began to rain quite heavily and the sky became greyer. On their right they passed the Lady's Rock where long ago, the Captain told her, Red Rob of the Cave tried to drown Catherine, daughter of Archibald, Earl of Argyll. Then they entered the Sound, with the rocky coast

of Mull on their left. Bleak as the island looked, it had a solid grandeur that could compete with more wooded places.

At the western end of the Sound was their destination, the town of Tobermory, or Well of Mary. The bay, a natural harbour, was ringed by a single row of shops, hotels and houses. Other scattered residences were dotted up the hillside among some of the very few trees on Mull. As they glided towards the pier, Joan drank in the fine, sweeping view. At the same time the side of her that appreciated modern comfort noted an imposing new hotel on the hill above the pier.

The bright little man who met her on Tobermory Pier was called by the impressive name of Iain MacGillivray. His part in the itinerary was to take her by car to Port Erraig.

"Miss Webster?" he asked, with a quick smile. "Be getting in quickly, out of the rain."

Joan bundled herself and her two cases into the battered car. Iain took the wheel.

"It's a pity about the day," he said, as they moved off. "An hour ago it was very pretty. Ach, but it never stays fine for long in the Isles, you will soon get used to it. Are you for Kiloran, Miss Webster?"

"Yes. Is it far to Port Erraig?"

"Quite a step if you walk. Only forty minutes if you have a car. And you *have* a car."

It was not very warm. The rain had slackened but there was a distinct mist. They struck inland through a wild country of mountain masses and birch-lined glens. The black earth was muddy and slippery from the rain, and Iain drove carefully. The itinerary, so meticulously prepared in London, made her due in Port Erraig at 5.15. She was only ten minutes late. After crossing a wild moor, they descended steeply into the ravine of Erraig, and Iain stopped the car.

"This is as far as the car can take you this evening, Miss Webster. The hill is very steep and I'd never get up after the rain. Port Erraig is down there beyond the trees."

He took her to an iron gate and pointed the way. On their left was a black, square tower on a rocky knoll among the trees. From the direction of the port, great waves of mist were now sweeping up towards them.

"That is Moy Castle," Iain said, indicating the tower. "The ancient home of the Maclaines of Erraig."

Joan stared at the gaunt, ruined building, half hidden by the mist. "Where do they live now?"

"Down there in Erraig House. Ach, but they're all dead now . . . or in New Zealand. There will only be Catriona Maclaine."

"Are people allowed in the Castle?"

"Ach, yes. Everybody can go in." Iain corrected himself. "Except the Lairds of Kiloran. There's a curse on them." He said this in a matter-of-fact voice but not lightly.

"What sort of curse?" Joan asked, curiously.

"Tis if they should ever set foot across the threshold. They say it's a terrible strong curse."

"Then this is my last chance!" Joan said, with a smile. She was thinking that soon she would be the wife of the owner of Kiloran and presumably subject to the family curses.

The quietness was broken by a long-drawn call from down by the sea. Iain answered it with a wild Gaelic screech of terrific carrying power, but did not seem to understand what it meant. Joan picked up her bags.

"I'd better go down."

"Will I take them for you?"

"No thanks. I can manage."

"I'd better wait a wee while," Iain said. "Ruairidh Mor may not be willing to cross to Kiloran in this weather."

"Don't bother," Joan explained. "You see, my fiancé is coming from Kiloran to fetch me."

Iain regarded her with a new interest. "So the rich gentleman in spectacles is your fiancé?"

"Yes."

"Seall sin a nis! Well, indeed, a thousand blessings on you both."

"Thank you," Joan said, much charmed.

Iain climbed back into the car. "But in a fog like the one that's coming," he said, "your fiancé won't see any better with six pairs of spectacles than with one . . ."

Joan set off down the hill, carrying her bags, her walk firm and confident.

CHAPTER THREE

IT WAS no longer possible to speak of a mist. Great clouds of fog rolled up to engulf Joan as she picked her way down the rough road to the pier. Soon she could only see a few yards in front of her, so that she had no means of telling how much further she had to go. Suddenly a man loomed up directly in her path. He gave the impression of having been looking for her.

A lieutenant in the R.N.V.R., he was in naval uniform, over which he wore a dark blue mackintosh and gloves, but there was something about him that said he was a part of this district and not merely a visitor. A kitbag was flung over his shoulder, and his manner was one that pleased instantly. About thirty years of age, he had frank, kindly eyes that smiled in a friendly way at Joan.

"Bad luck," he said. "No crossing today." He jerked his head towards the pier which she could dimly see now. There was also the outline of a small boat, moored against the pier.

"Is that the boat from Kiloran?" Joan asked.

"No. It's a pity you didn't keep Iain's car. That's why I was shouting."

"We didn't understand. Why should I keep it, anyway?"

"To get back to Tobermory and spend the night in a comfortable bed."

His easy manner seemed to her to take too much for granted. She could decide her own movements and she knew exactly what she meant to do.

"I intend to spend the night on Kiloran," she said, firmly.

The man considered her for a moment. She had spirit, he decided, and he liked that in a girl. But she also had a lot to learn. He decided to give her another chance.

"Would you like to wait up at the House? I know the people."

"Thank you," Joan said, her obstinacy rising rapidly, "but it has been arranged for the boat to meet me here and I had better be here to meet it."

As he well knew, this sounded more reasonable than it actually was. No boat would cross in this fog. However, there was nothing like people learning by experience.

"Good!" he exclaimed, heartily, and stood watching her as she pushed past him and walked down to the pier. There was amusement on his face as he turned and went up the way she had come.

Joan reached the pier and looked about her. A gnarled, mountainous old fisherman was clearing up, preparatory to departure. A boyish, round-faced lad of eighteen was helping him. Joan looked at them expectantly but they hardly seemed to notice her. While they removed some things from the boat and covered it for the night they conversed in a tongue that was a complete mystery to her. She imagined that they were discussing her, because that was a better thought than that she was being utterly ignored. In fact, their conversation was severely practical, the subject being a tooth that was bothering the old man. Joan felt she could bear this no longer.

"Is that Gaelic you are talking?" she asked politely.

The old man stopped his work long enough to shoot a glance in her direction. "Yes, my lady. What would it be but the Gaalic?"

She had the feeling that he had only answered her in order to correct her pronunciation of a vastly important word. She went to within a yard of the edge of the pier and sat down on her cases. Through an occasional gap in the fog, which was not yet at its worst, the rays of the setting sun struck obliquely across the water. She could just see a low-lying land mass in the distance which she knew must be Kiloran. It was tantalisingly near.

A curious whining sound came from out of the fog. Joan turned quickly to the young man. "What's that noise?"

"That will be the seals singing, Miss."

"The seals!" Joan exclaimed, not sure if he was joking. The old fisherman answered. "Yess, yess. They like the warrum foggy weather."

The two men were now finished and ready to go.

The idea of being completely deserted struck coldly at Joan's heart. She made a last bid for help.

"If my boat doesn't come, will you take me?"

The old man was already walking away. "I will not, my lady," he said over his shoulder.

They left her, apparently thinking it perfectly natural that a girl should choose to sit in such a spot all night. The sound of their footsteps disappeared up the path. Joan began to feel very cold and disconsolate. Here was something the itinerary had not covered, elaborate as it was. Even Consolidated Chemical Industries could not control a whim of the elements, although no doubt they were working on the problem.

She stood up and paced the small pier which was little else than a stone jetty with a boat-shed. All she could hear was the quiet lapping of the water. The fog was closing in blackly and the last light of evening was slipping down into the sea. Joan stood still and listened intently for the sound of a boat's engine. What a relief it would be! But only the awful moan of the seals came up to her. She shivered. This was very different from the lavish attentions of the journey and the perfect organisation of the sleeping-cabin. She was beginning to see that the hand of man grows weaker the further it stretches away from the big cities.

Quite suddenly she decided upon retreat. The sheer impossibility of staying there by herself triumphed over her natural obstinacy. It was altogether too quiet, too damp and too dark. Picking up her bags she went back up the path. When she reached the point at which Iain had set her down she turned to the right in the hope of finding the house the naval man had mentioned. The road was miry and her shoes sank into the mud. There were footsteps ahead in the fog and a young girl appeared with a cow. The girl was very young, not more than seventeen, bareheaded and barelegged. Although Joan did not know, she was the old fisherman's daughter, Bridie. She said, shyly: "Don't be frightened of the cow. She is not in calf. Are you looking for the House?"

"Yes. Am I all right?"

"You will be seeing an archway higher up on the right. The House is through it."

The girl watched Joan curiously as she trudged on. The archway soon appeared. It was the entrance to a wide yard in which pieces of tarpaulin and corrugated iron lay around. There was no sign of life. Joan passed through the yard and found a large door, wide open. Tentatively stepping inside, she saw a long narrow corridor, carpetless, cheerless and in a terrible state of neglect. As she walked doubtfully along it she came to more open doors, revealing dirty, unfurnished rooms, on the walls of which still hung precariously an occasional huge, incongruous painting. Some chickens in the corridor flew off with squawks of dismay at her approach. The whole prospect was anything but inviting, but as there was nowhere else to go Joan returned to the front door and banged hard on the knocker. A booming echo came back to her from the ruined house. Seeing a rusty wire hanging from the side of the door she tugged at it, and from some faraway dungeon came a single, sonorous clang. Once again she

ventured down the corridor, coming to some stairs at the end which led up to a door. This was opened unexpectedly to reveal a tall, large, flamboyant man of about fifty. From his clothes he might have been a sportsman or an explorer or both. Old and battered, they consisted of ancient riding breeches, a tweed jacket with voluminous pockets stretched to their limits by years of over-crowding, a pullover and a pair of muddy brogues. His face was grizzled and weather-beaten and looked as though it could be very ferocious indeed at times. At the moment it registered a charming smile and Joan was addressed with almost old-world courtesy.

"May I be the first to welcome you to these marble halls, young lady?"

He came out into the corridor and Joan was startled to notice that he was carrying a strange bird on his gloved left hand. She later discovered that it was called a hooded peregrine falcon.

"I'm sorry I wandered in like this," she apologised.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" he declared. "Besides, I'm not the host. I'm a guest like yourself, blown here by the wind of circumstance."

He opened the door wide for Joan to enter. Inside was a complete contrast to the squalor and neglect of the rest of the house. This section had been made into a charming little flat. There was a small passage with rooms opening off it and bright curtains at the windows. A door at the end of the passage was open and Joan went in, to be greeted at once by the naval officer she had already met.

"I was just going down to get you," he said, taking her cases and showing no surprise at her change of heart. "Come on in, we've lit the fire. You've met the Colonel, I see."

"I've had that exceptional pleasure," the Colonel said, adding for Joan's benefit: "My name is Barnstaple."

"Colonel Barnstaple," the officer completed. "The greatest hawk-trainer . . ."

Barnstaple groaned. "Falconer, my dear Torquil . . ."

"Sorry, Colonel. The greatest *falconer* in the Western Isles."

"In the world, my boy, in the world!" the Colonel corrected.

Joan introduced herself. The naval man's name was Torquil Macneil. He had discarded his cap and mackintosh, was smoking a pipe, and looked very much at home. His hair was a darkish brown.

They were in a big, comfortable sitting-room which had deep bay windows facing the south-west. The furniture—a settee, some arm-chairs, a table, and many knick-knacks—was shabby but good. Two large oil-lamps lit the room. Near the window was a perch to which the Colonel now transferred his falcon.

Joan went gratefully to the fire which was burning peat and logs. A few moments ago she could not have conceived it possible to be near such comfort.

"Catriona's out," Torquil said. "She's our hostess. She's no idea you and I are here but she'll find a corner for us."

"She's a grand girl, bless her heart," the Colonel averred. "A grand girl!"

"I've known her since we were kids," Torquil explained. "She married an Englishman called Potts. He's in the Middle East and the kid's at boarding-school. How's business, Colonel?"

"Fair, my boy. I took this chap off the nest in April up in Orkney. One of the nicest little peregrines I've ever handled. I'll work him for you when the fog clears. But I've got a new line now. Eagles. I've been training a Golden Eagle for seven months."

"An eagle! Hunting with it like a hawk?"

"Ah-ha!" Barnstaple roared gleefully. "That's shaken you!"

"Where is it?" Torquil asked. "Can I see it?"

The Colonel made a wide gesture with his arms. "Gone, my boy! Flew off four days ago . . . and hasn't come back yet."

Everything the Colonel said had to be at the top of his voice. He was aggressively outdoors, a large, extroverted, lovable fanatic. His bristling rough moustache was like the turf he trod most of his waking hours.

"Where did you last see the eagle?"

"On Gorrie's Leap. I was flying him after rabbit and the blighter lost interest, sailed off up Beinn Teallach and I lost him in a cloud. So here I am! Every day I'm out after him. I've trod that blasted mountain almost into the ground. But he'll be back!"

"After four days," Torquil said, sceptically. "Not likely."

"What do you know about eagles?"

"Not a thing. And I've never heard of hawking with eagles, either."

"It can be done, my boy," Barnstaple roared. "It can be done. But nobody's done it yet."

Joan watched and listened to this strange conversation while the warmth returned to her body. How pleasant it was in this peaceful room after the damp gloom of the outside world! Her eyes travelled over the flowered covers of the furniture, the stuffed deer's head above the mantelpiece, the pile of logs beside the now blazing fire, the guns and small frames on the walls, the comfortable rugs—and found them all very satisfying.

There was a sudden clamour from the corridor outside, the dominant note of which was the deep-mouthed baying of hounds.

"Catriona!" Torquil exclaimed, his eyes lighting up.

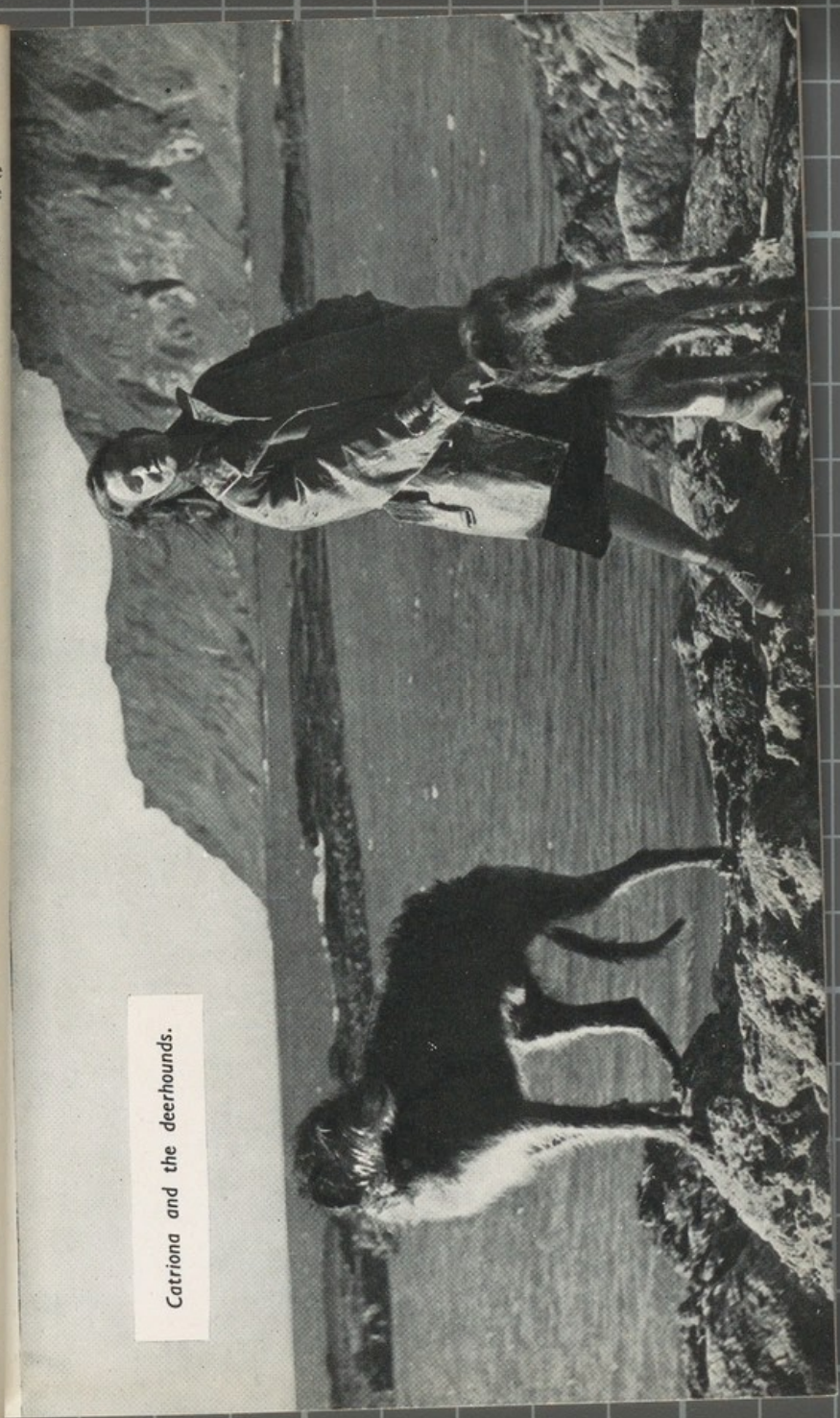
"There she is," boomed the Colonel. "There's the dear girl now!"

Joan found herself wondering what marvellous creature could be the cause of all this excitement, and braced herself for the impact. The door burst open and a girl stood in the doorway. At the same time nine great deer-hounds brushed past her and poured into the room, immediately occupying the settee and every available chair. There was an electric atmosphere in the air.

"Torquil!" the girl cried in delighted recognition.

"Mrs. Potts!"

He opened wide his arms and with wild Highland yells they flung themselves together in a joyous embrace, hugging one another in very evident devotion. Joan stared wide-eyed, beginning to realise that the world is large, and life full of variety.



Catriona and the deerhounds.

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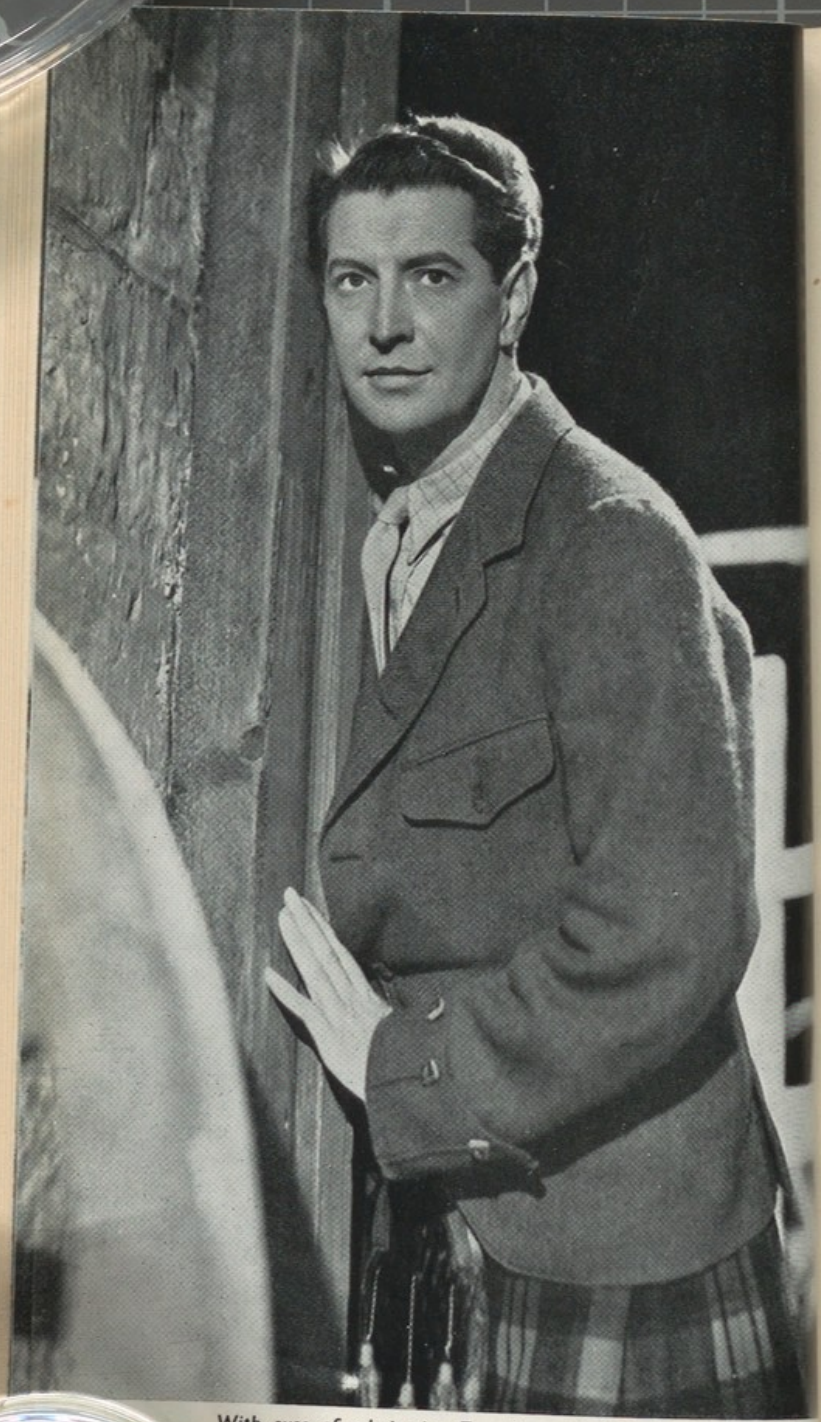
Joan writes to her father.

Tea-party at Achnacroish



With eyes of admiration Torquil watched Joan.

Catriona Maclaine was a slight girl in the middle twenties. At the moment she looked like a ragged gipsy. Her mass of long, dark hair fell across her face. She wore a faded tartan skirt and an old leather jacket, and there was a shot-gun across her shoulder. She had no stockings and had been carrying her brogues and three large dead rabbits before she dropped them to clasp Torquil. Almost drowned from the rain, and covered in mud, she seemed to radiate a fresh, vigorous energy. And yet a closer view of her face revealed the burning eyes and vision of a mystic, and a deep, impregnable inner strength. She had simplicity but was not simple, goodness that was not piety.

Now the air was full of the Gaelic.

"Cia mar tha sibh, Catriona gaolach?"

"Cia mar tha sibh fhein, Kiloran dubh?"

They broke apart at last and stared at one another with unfeigned pleasure. One of the hounds descended leisurely from a chair and licked Torquil's hand.

"Still got all these damned great dogs! How on earth do you manage to feed 'em?"

"We live off the country . . . rabbits, deer, game and a stray hiker or two! What d'you expect me to do, eat them myself, just when the breed is getting known?" She called the dog. "Loch Buie! Here boy!" The enormous deer-hound, with its fine long hair and sharp pointed face, came languidly up to her, and she fondled its ears lovingly. "Look at that bone! That head, eh? All right, good boy." The dog returned to an armchair.

Catriona had a fresh bout of enthusiasm.

"Torquil, a bhalaich, it is good of you to come and see an old bag like me . . . "

For the first time she noticed Joan. "Hullo!" she said, and glanced quickly at Torquil.

"This is a fellow traveller to Kiloran," he explained.

"Oh, I see. Ruairidh wouldn't take you over." She was obviously disappointed that his visit was due to an accident.

"You're right but I love you all the same," Torquil said, putting his arm about her. "I came over by the mid-day bus just to see you. This is Miss Webster."

Joan felt absurdly pleased to be brought into this warm environment of human affection. Catriona went over to her and shook hands.

"How d'you do? I'm sorry I didn't see you before. It's Torquil's fault. You'll stay here to-night, of course. I hope you don't mind roughing it . . . "

"I'm awfully sorry to trouble you," Joan said, embarrassed. She came from a world where people telephoned before they dropped in.

"Trouble me? Why, you're a godsend. I haven't heard any intelligent female nonsense for months. Besides, there's nowhere else you could go. Don't worry, you won't have to sleep on the floor, though the men will. I don't know which way you came in but I suppose you noticed the place was knocked about a bit."

"It did look a bit bleak," Joan said, cautiously.

"And no wonder, my dear! I've only just got rid of the boys . . . the R.A.F. I had 'em for two years. Eighty of 'em, no less. A D.F. Station. They put in concrete foundations and generating stations and damn great masts and a field-hospital, and then the great day came for the first trials and they put on their little headphones, and said: 'No!' . . . and took it all away to put up somewhere else. It was the cliff, or something. They've only just gone. Of course, I loved having them, and I never had to worry about feeding the dogs."

They all laughed. "But they'll compensate you for the damage?"

"Oh yes, rather. We've had stacks of correspondence about that. They've been very fair, apart from trying to sell me their concrete foundations, but I wasn't having any! They'll pay a lump sum or do the place up as it was. After the war, of course."

"Up the Maclaines!" Torquil cried. "Beatha no Bas!"

"Beatha no Bas!" she responded, her eyes flashing. "Will you have a dram?"

"Certainly."

A bottle was brought and banged upon the table.

"Help yourselves! We'll get the dinner. Buie, you mongrel, leave those rabbits alone." She picked up the rabbits. "We'll make a pie."

"The Colonel says you're a dead shot these days," Torquil said.

Catriona grinned at him. "My dear Torquil, I've got a tip for you that will improve your own shooting. After screwing a few cartridges out of the local controller, find a sitting rabbit, take aim, say to yourself: 'If I don't kill this rabbit, I don't eat' . . . and you don't miss!"

"And she doesn't," the Colonel said, with pride.

"No luck yet, Colonel?" Catriona asked. She was referring to the lost eagle. He shook his head sadly. "No, but . . . he'll be back!"

Catriona turned to Joan. "What's your other name?"

"Joan."

"Mine's Catriona. Can you skin a rabbit?"

Joan gave a startled smile that might mean anything. The two girls went out together, carrying the rabbits. Torquil handed the Colonel a dram of whisky and held up his own glass.

"Slainte math!"

"Slahnjavaw!" Barnstaple responded, gravely.

Each demolished the dram at a gulp and peacefully waited for it to take effect. Torquil grew thoughtful. After a while he said: "Taming a woman must be worse than taming an eagle."

"Can't be done, my boy. Can't be done."

This seemed to dispose of the matter once and for all. There was another pause, and then the Colonel asked: "How's the war treated you?"

"All right. Seen a bit of the world."

"Been home much?"

"Not for four years."

"Staying long?"

"Eight days."

They glanced round as Joan came back. She beckoned the Colonel. "You're wanted, Colonel. There's a right way and a wrong way of skinning a rabbit. I only know the wrong way."

Barnstaple clicked his heels. "On parade!" he bellowed, and marched to the door. Then he stopped and listened carefully. While the others watched him he went to the window and opened it, giving a strange whistle and letting a flow of fog into the room.

"Hear any bells?" he demanded, abruptly. They shook their heads. He closed the window again. "Thought it might have been the old boy," he said, sadly. With a sigh he went off to the rabbits.

Torquil made up the fire and knocked out his pipe.

"What did he think he heard?" Joan asked.

"His eagle."

Joan pondered. "He's a little odd, isn't he?"

Torquil looked quizzically at her. "Who isn't?" he asked, quietly.

They both lit cigarettes. Presently he spoke again.

"If the wind gets up, it will soon blow the fog away." He said this because he knew it was what she wanted to hear. They listened. The window rattled nervously and a puff of smoke broke from the fire into the room.

"Sounds as if it is," Joan said.

"Are you staying long on Kiloran?" he asked.

"A few days."

"Know anyone there?"

"Yes," she said, thinking that he would be surprised if he knew who it was.

"It's a fine island."

"I know."

This interested him. "Been there before?"

"No. I've heard a lot about it. Have you been there?"

Torquil was amused at the question. "I've known it for twenty-nine years."

"I shouldn't have thought you were as old as that."

"Four years older."

After a moment Joan asked: "Are *you* staying on the island?"

"I've got eight days leave. I want to spend it there."

They could hear the wind getting stronger. The windows were now rattling continuously. Joan stared into the fire.

"Do you know Sir Robert Bellinger?" she asked.

"I've never met him."

"Does he know that you're going to Kiloran?"

"No. Do you know him?"

"Very well."

"Nice chap?"

Joan smiled. "The nicest."

"Hm. I should like to meet him."

"You're bound to, aren't you, on a little island like Kiloran?"

"It's not so little."

Joan sat down on the settee, temporarily vacated by the dogs. "I was told that you can walk from one end to the other in an hour and a half."

"I suppose you can if you want to. But who wants to? There are better things to do."

One of the dogs came up and put a long paw on Joan's knee in a gesture of friendliness. "What things?"

"Shoot grouse, fish for trout, bathe in Kiloran bay . . . Picnic at Pigs' Paradise . . ."

"Where's that?"

"On the western cliffs." He walked over to the wall where there was a map of Kiloran that she had not noticed before, and pointed to the spot. "There's an eagle's eyrie on Beinn Breac. I've promised to take the Colonel there."

Joan joined him and looked with interest at the drawing of the long piece of bare land on which she was to be married.

"The Colonel's going too?"

"Yes. He's got a permit from Bellinger."

"So one does need a permit?" She was puzzled by the way he appeared to ignore this point. Surely no one could visit Kiloran without Robert's consent. But Torquil avoided a direct answer.

"In wartime, for ordinary visitors, yes. But I'm staying with the Factor. He's got a house on the West Side."

"Kiloran House is near the lake, isn't it?"

"The loch? Yes."

They fell into silence, and soon were joined by the others.

* * * * *

After an enormous dinner of rabbit pie, and an equally generous helping of laughter and friendly human society, a tired Joan went up to her room. It was somewhat bare and bleak but the bed felt soft and inviting, and that was what mattered. She undressed as quickly as possible, for it was quite chilly, and picked up the oil-lamp from the table. With typical inexperience of such primitive objects, she moved it too quickly and it flared up suddenly. After that she handled it more cautiously, and set it down beside her bed.

There was a knock at the door. She jumped into bed and called: "Who is it?"

"It's me," Torquil said. "I've just had a look outside. It's much clearer. If the wind doesn't drop the fog will be gone in the morning."

"Thanks for telling me."

"See you in the morning. Good night."

"Good night."

When his steps had died away down the uncarpeted passage, Joan lay passively for a while thinking about the events of the morrow, when she would cross to Kiloran and meet Robert. Her mind turned, also, to these strange people she had just met. They occupied a world utterly different from anything she had known before, a world

that was undeniably pleasant and warm. And there was about them such dignity, and a kind of independence that had no suggestion of egotism in it, an independence that recognised the freedom of others. But she couldn't help thinking of Catriona and the Colonel as being vaguely eccentric—in a nice way. Torquil Macneil was a different matter. Apart from that wild, Highland meeting, he seemed normal enough and he had the nicest smile she had ever seen in a man. . .

So the fog was clearing. Perhaps already it was possible to see Kiloran from her window. Acting on an impulse she got out of bed, lit a cigarette, turned the lamp down to a glimmer and pulled back the curtains. A strong breeze ruffled her hair. Yes, he was right, the air was much clearer. She was about to turn back when a voice quite close to her said: "You can see the trees now. In half an hour you will see the shore."

Torquil was standing at the open window of his room which was at right-angles to Joan's and only a few feet away. He had startled her for a moment.

"In half an hour I shall be asleep," Joan replied.

Torquil ignored her words and her tone. He went on gaily: "There's a grand view of Kiloran from here, the north-east end. At sunrise you can see the light shine on the sands of Balnahard Bay. With a glass you can make out the people walking about . . ."

She was about to excuse herself when he said quickly: "Have you a match or a lighter?"

Joan thought for a moment and then leaned out of the window and held out her lighted cigarette to him. He took it, and lit his own cigarette, his eyes glowing in the semi-darkness. In passing the cigarette back his hand touched hers and he noticed the diamond on her finger. "Are you engaged?"

"Yes. I'm going to be married on Kiloran."

"It's an honour for Kiloran," Torquil said gravely. "Well, may your pulse beat as your heart would wish."

"Thank you." Joan was still searching for an opportunity to get away.

"Is it to be soon?" he persisted.

"To-morrow. Weather permitting."

"Have you got any beams in your room?"

She glanced back to find out. "Yes."

"Count them before you go to sleep and your wish will come true."

"As easy as that?"

"Only the first night under the roof."

"People in modern houses don't know what they're missing," Joan said, lightly. Now this conversation must end. "Good night," she added, firmly.

"Good night." Then as she disappeared: "I warn you it doesn't work if you don't believe in it . . ."

Joan closed the curtains and went back to bed. About to blow out the lamp, she changed her mind, turned it up and looked at the ceiling. "One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . ." she

counted. Then, very seriously, with a gravity that seemed to go very deep, she murmured: "Please, Lord, don't let the wind drop . . . and let it blow away the fog . . ."

Feeling that she had now done everything possible in the circumstances, she put out the light and went to sleep.

CHAPTER FOUR

THROUGHOUT the night the wind screamed and howled in an increasing frenzy, and a dull roar from great waves crashing on the seashore broke across the house. But Joan was now in a sleep of utter exhaustion. Too much had happened in one day and her tired body demanded time to recuperate. Only when fresh strength began to return in the early hours of the following morning did the violence outside begin to make inroads on her mind, and even then it only caused her to turn occasionally in semi-consciousness. But this restlessness increased as time went by, and soon after eight o'clock she opened her eyes and faced a new day.

Torquil had been down to the beach already and was walking back. In mufti now, a thick tweed jacket and Highland kilt, he appeared to be in high good humour as he leaned against the wind and battled his way up. Glancing at Joan's window he saw her draw the curtains and look out.

Joan was enjoying her first full view of Kiloran. The ground fell away below the house, down to the beach. Opposite was the great sweeping line of Erraig Cliffs, eight hundred feet sheer above the white horses of a turbulent sea. And there was Kiloran! In the clear, fresh morning, it was so close that last night's problems seemed ridiculous. Joan took a deep breath. The fog had gone. Her wish was fulfilled!

"Hullo!" Torquil called. They waved to each other.

"This counting beams certainly works," Joan said, gaily.

"The trouble is you wished too hard. We're having a gale."

"A gale? What does that mean?"

"Ruairidh Mor will tell you better than I can."

Joan dressed hastily and joined him. They strode down to the pier where great waves were breaking over the jetty. The old man whose queer Gaelic name meant "Roderick", Joan discovered, was busy with his boy, Kenny, stowing the boat away in the boat-shed. They were both in oil-skins. Replying to her anxious questions, Roderick said: "How long can the gale last? As long as the wind blows, my lady!"

"It can last a day," Torquil said. "Or it can blow for a week."

Joan stared out to sea. "It looks so near . . . in half an hour you could be there."

"In less than one second," the old man said solemnly, "you can get from this world into the next!"

No answer was possible to this profundity. "Can we speak to the island?" Joan asked Torquil.

"Yes, from the coastguard-post. Can civilians still use the short-wave radio, Ruairidh?"

"Ay."

This meant taking the bus back to Tobermory. Torquil arranged for Roderick to keep in touch with the Colonel who would let them know by telephone when conditions were sufficiently improved to permit a crossing. On the way back to the House for breakfast, Torquil proposed that they should both move into the Western Isles hotel in Tobermory for the time being as they were rather a strain on Catriona's household. Joan readily agreed.

After breakfast they made for the bus stop, passing a high waterfall that thundered down from the mountain beside the road. Here also was a telephone box, so near that it was splashed by the spray. Torquil went in and telephoned the hotel, a difficult feat in the face of the noise from the fall.

"It was a compromise," he explained. "Post Office wanted it up top. Catriona down below."

"But why just here?"

"It was a dry summer when they put it here. They forgot that when it rained . . ." He got through at that moment and closed the door. Emerging a few moments later, he said: "It's all right. You have a big room!"

"What about you?"

"Oh, I have a small one," he smiled.

They continued to climb the hill, their backs to Kiloran. Torquil showed no signs of regret that his holiday on the island was being curtailed. On the contrary, he was in the best of spirits, and Joan, too, did not find herself as put out as she would have expected. They arrived at the iron gate where Iain had deposited her the previous evening. Moy Castle towered to their right.

Joan stopped with her hand on the gate. "Now's my chance to see the Castle. I suppose you've been inside hundreds of times?"

"No," Torquil said.

"Haven't you, really?" She walked towards it. "Well, are you coming now?"

He did not move. "No. Thank you."

"*You* needn't worry about the Curse," Joan said, gaily.

He looked a little stern. "What do you know about the Curse?"

"I know that it's upon the Lairds of Kiloran." She had climbed the few moss-covered steps and was standing before the huge door. "I don't know whether the wives, or the prospective wives, of the Lairds are involved . . . but I'll risk it!"

With an effort she pushed open the old, stone door which creaked complainingly and slowly fell back showing the dark interior. Standing on the threshold with the sun on her, she looked down at Torquil. "Coming?"

He stood looking up at her without moving, his dark head against

the white road. His expression was quite new to her. It was assertive, proud, even a little arrogant, and when he spoke his voice had a ring in it.

"I am Macneil of Kiloran!" he said.

There was a long pause. Neither of them moved, and in the stillness the sound of a stream nearby seemed quite loud. Joan was much impressed by the tone of his voice and the pride of his bearing. She waited for him to speak again. He relaxed and smiled, lowering his voice now. "And I am the Laird of Kiloran. Sir Robert Bellinger has rented the island for the duration."

Joan felt humiliated. All she said was: "I see."

He wished to help her. "There's not much difference. It's his for the time being."

But they both knew that there was a world of difference. She had a flash of temper. "Do you believe in the Curse?"

He regarded her steadily, in no way intimidated. "My father never entered Moy Castle. Nor did my grandfather. Or his father . . . And nor will I . . ."

"How on earth can you stand it?" she exclaimed, seeking some ground on which to attack him. "Aren't you curious?"

"I don't think so," he said, slowly. "It has always been like that."

Joan closed the door with a bang. They walked away together, putting the Castle behind them.

"Who put the curse on the Macneils?" Joan asked, her ill-temper gone.

Torquil was glad the unpleasantness had passed. "It was a woman. She was a Maclaine of Erraig. My great-great-great grandfather took her to wife. When I say 'took her' I mean he 'took her'. They say she was very lovely. She loved her cousin, who held Moy Castle. After a year and a day, when her husband was away ravaging the mainland, she escaped from Kiloran and took refuge here with her lover. One black night he came and took the Castle by surprise. He killed every living thing except the two lovers, who were captured alive, stripped and chained together and thrown into the dungeon you can still see in the thickness of the wall. It's just a well, with nine feet of water in it and a rounded stone above the surface of the water, with room for a man to stand upon it, or drown. It lies off the banqueting-hall, and there he sat and feasted and mocked them while they held each other above the water till their strength failed and they dragged each other down. Before she died, the woman cursed Kiloran and every Macneil of Kiloran that came after him, if they should ever cross the threshold of Moy!"

He paused, and then seeing the bus in the distance, began to run, crying, "Here comes the bus! Hurry!"

They arrived breathless, just in time. The bus was white and there was a door in the rear for passengers. As they climbed in it began to rain. The bus was fairly full of local working people, most of them wearing caps, while some of the older men had beards. There were farmers and shepherds, some women and girls going to the shops,

and four school-children with satchels. Two of the shepherds had shotguns over their shoulders.

Torquil and Joan sat facing each other. The bus went on, passing the north shores of a loch some four hundred yards across. The mountains of Laggan rose steeply on the far side and the lonely shores were ringed with rowans. Joan stared out of the window at the lovely sight.

"This is Loch Uisg," Torquil said.

"It's beautiful!"

"But nothing to Kiloran."

One of the shepherds, who had been muttering in Gaelic to his companion, tapped Torquil on the shoulder. "Excuse me, sir. Are you not Macneil of Kiloran?"

"Yes."

"You are right, Seumas," the shepherd said, "it is Kiloran himself. I knew you as a boy, Kiloran. I knew your father well. My wife is from the island . . . from Riasg Buidhe . . . Katy Clark."

"Katy Clark! Then you are John MacAllister?"

The shepherd was pleased. "Yess, yess! You have your father's memory, Kiloran."

The other men now gathered round and joined in while the rest of the passengers listened, beaming. Joan was impressed with the comradeship of them all, but also with the respect shown to Torquil. Since she had known Sir Robert Bellinger she had seen a great deal of what she thought was respect, but it had been nothing like this. She dimly realised that Torquil's position was high by birth, but that only his own qualities kept him there.

He answered many questions about his war experiences and the length of his present stay in the neighbourhood, and in turn asked after his friends on the island.

"Ah, well now, they're fine, they're very fine," the shepherd said. His companion took up the subject. "My son is after telling me about the Rich Man on Kiloran, him that is your tenant, Kiloran. Like a little king, he is."

Torquil flashed a quick glance at Joan, who promptly stared out of the window.

The shepherd's son joined in. "Yess, yess. My wife's second cousin, Hector MacCodrum, wass working there the entire spring, on a swimming-pond that he was building."

"A swimming-pool?"

"A duine, duine! What foolishness! With the whole wide sea to swim in . . .!"

"And the loch!"

"Ah well, money spent is money earned," Torquil said, diplomatically. He would not have stopped this conversation for worlds.

"Ach, yess, yess, my wife's second cousin is not complaining! Peat does not fall from an empty creel."

Joan felt herself going hot. She hardly knew whether to be angry or to laugh. Whenever she caught Torquil's eyes she turned hastily

away. He was not exactly grinning, but there was something in his expression that was not far from mockery.

The shepherd shook his head and said, severely: "He has no care of money, the Rich Man of Kiloran. He brings salmon with him from the mainland! And the waters here full of salmon!"

There was a general laugh. "Who is fishing for salmon on Kiloran?" Torquil asked, with a smile.

"Well, who would be fishing when there is no one to be buying?" the shepherd said, indignantly.

Torquil had made his point. "So he would have to start buying before anyone would start fishing?"

This piece of Highland economics pleased everybody, except perhaps Joan.

"Ach! Can he not fish for himself?"

"He cannot. He has the finest tackle from Glasgow, but . . . the fish don't know him!"

It was another way of naming him a foreigner and Joan knew it. Torquil thought it time to change the subject. "What are all the guns for?"

"We have been losing lambs. There's an eagle been seen. A Golden Eagle!"

Torquil started. The Colonel!

"It's twelve years since there was an eyrie in this part of Mull," the shepherd said.

"Where was he seen?" Torquil asked.

"Up on the Teallach."

The bus stopped and the men got out, wishing good day and good health to Kiloran and his young lady. Looking back they lifted their hats and started up the high ground between the two lochs. It was raining through the sunlight, and the great arch of a rainbow rose out of the water and disappeared behind a mountain. When the bus had started again Torquil glanced at Joan who was looking studiedly cool.

"I could hardly wish them 'Good Hunting'," he said, thinking of the Colonel's eagle. "You didn't mind what they said?"

"I thought it was nonsense. Why shouldn't one build a swimming-pool if one can afford it? I like swimming-pools."

"Matter of taste," Torquil agreed, briefly.

"Exactly. And I also prefer to call up the fishmonger when I feel like eating salmon, instead of wading about knee-deep in water waiting for a salmon to pass by."

He frowned. "Really?"

"Really."

He gave her a very concerned glance. She was not feeling on very sure ground herself and preferred to concentrate on the view, which rewarded her with a magnificent panorama of the Central Highlands.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEY stood in the little coastguard-post in Tobermory and waited for contact to be established with the Isle of Kiloran. It was very like a small country post-office, except that its most important piece of furniture was the short-wave radio telephone set on a table by itself. In the window were some geraniums and a dozing cat. A slim, bent, grey-haired old lady was the postmistress and between her efforts to speak to Kiloran she dealt with an occasional customer or exchanged a few words with her husband in Gaelic. But she was most concerned with the radio which was switched on and gave out odd buzzes and chirps from time to time as though talking to itself.

Torquil drew Joan's attention to a large engraving on the wall. Faded and fly-blown as it was, it could easily be recognised as a highly dramatic work, depicting some legend or scene in history. Between two islands, one round and the other long, both dark and precipitous, was a gulf, through which a tidal race was boiling and leaping. On one side a great whirlpool was spinning turbulently, throwing up a great crest of foam. On its very brink an ancient galley, of the Viking type, was anchored by three separate ropes from the bows. Clearly a great battle with the elements was going on, while on the prow of the galley, defying the danger, stood a noble youth. Beneath the picture was the title: "Corryvreckan."

Torquil explained. "'Coire' means a cauldron or whirlpool. 'Breacain' was a Prince of Norway. He sought the daughter of the Lord of the Isles in marriage."

The pitch of the radio changed and they glanced across expectantly, but the old postmistress shook her head and smiled: "Not yet."

"Go on," Joan said.

"The Lord of the Isles refused to give away his daughter . . ."

"Of course," Joan interrupted. "He was a Scotsman!"

"Except on one condition. Breacain must anchor his galley in the Gulf of Coire Brecain for three days and nights."

Joan looked sceptical. "What was the catch?"

"The catch was that he was sure he would be drowned. It's a terrible place, when the tide is running the waves shoot up in great boils, whirlpools form and you can hear the roar for miles."

"I'll bet he did, all the same," Joan said, with feminine smugness. She received a scornful glance.

"What he did was to go straight back to Norway. There he asked the advice of the old men. They told him to take three anchor-ropes, one of hemp, one of . . . one of . . ."

"Flax!" The old postmistress helped him out.

"One of flax . . . thank you, Mrs. Beaton."

"You'll be knowing what the third rope was made of, Kiloran."

"Of course. The third rope was made from the hair of maidens who were faithful to their lovers."

"Go on," Joan persisted.

"The daughters of Norway willingly gave their tresses and Prince

Breacain sailed for the Hebrides." He pointed to the picture. "The first night the hemp-rope broke. The second night the rope of flax . . ." He bowed to the postmistress. ". . . broke. But the third rope held fast. The third night . . ."

He was interrupted by a loud signal from the radio set and a Hebridean man's voice, gentle and long-vowelled, came over clearly: "Hullo, Tobermory! Hullo, Tobermory! Isle of Kiloran speaking! Isle of Kiloran speaking! Over to you!"

The little old lady hurried forward and pressed a switch. There was something incongruous about her dealings with this modern instrument. "Hullo, Kiloran! Hullo, Kiloran! Tobermory speaking! Tobermory speaking! Miss Webster is here to speak to Sir Robert Bellinger. Stand by please! Miss Webster . . ."

Joan stepped to the set, finding to her annoyance that she was greatly embarrassed. She glanced back quickly at Torquil and then braced herself. "Hullo, Robert! Joan speaking! I'm here in Tobermory. I had a very good journey. Isn't it a shame about the weather?" She paused, uncertainly. For the life of her she could not manage anything more intimate although she was well aware that Torquil was closely watching her.

The postmistress came to her assistance. "If you want Sir Robert to answer you, say 'Over to you'."

At that moment Joan was not at all sure that she did want an answer but she nodded. The switch-over was made and a loud, hoarse, confident voice boomed out of the instrument.

"Hullo, my dear! I'm glad to hear your voice at any rate. We're all ready here, ready and waiting . . . worse luck!" He laughed, and in the speaker it sounded like a positive guffaw. "Cartier delivered the ring, I hope, and I hope you like it. I take it Hunter saw you off? Over!"

Joan had now recovered her balance somewhat. "Yes, of course, Robert. Everything was lovely. Is there anything the matter with your voice? Have you got a cold? Over!"

Torquil smiled in the background and turned his face away. The conversation continued. "Hullo! No, I haven't got a cold. Do I sound as if I had? Now listen, Joan. Write down a telephone number . . . 2-3-6 . . . got it? It's the Robinson's number, they've rented the Castle at Sorne. Robinson's done a lot of work for me one way or another, and he's one of the best. Ring them, they'll be glad to put you up. They're the only people worth while knowing around here. Over!"

Joan did not dare look at Torquil's face after that last remark.

"Hullo, Robert! I've got the number and I'll ring them, but I'd rather stay at the hotel. You don't mind, do you? Over!"

"As you like, my treasure. Do just as you like. I say, Joan, Major Foster, Macneil's Factor, is here beside me. He's waiting to talk to Mr. Macneil. Is he there? I thought he was in the Army. Over!"

"He is here. And he's in the Navy. Good-bye, Robert. I hope to see you to-morrow. Over!"

A pleasant, deep, English voice took the place of Bellinger's.

"Foster speaking. Hullo Kiloran! It's good to hear you're back even though you're stuck in Tobermory. Is there anything you want done? Over!"

"Hullo, Foster!" Torquil said, while Joan went back to re-examine the engraving. "Tell Duncan I expect the trout to come and jump into my creel and the grouse to perch on the end of my gun. I've had all your reports and read them. I'm looking forward to talking things over. Slainte math! Over!"

"Slainte mhor, Kiloran!"

The postmistress said the final good-bye to the island and switched off, leaving the room dominated by the sudden, strange silence.

"Thank you, Mrs. Beaton," Torquil said. "How much?"

"Ninepence each, Kiloran."

Torquil produced the exact money. Joan tendered a pound note.

"I can't change that, my dear," the old lady exclaimed.

"Here you are," Torquil said. "One-and-six."

Joan hesitated. "I'll pay you back at the hotel."

"Good!" he replied, with a gleam of amusement.

They waved to Mrs. Beaton, who had gone to answer the telephone, and left. In the street Torquil explained: "She wouldn't see a pound note from one Pensions Day to another."

"I see. People are very poor around here, I suppose?"

"Not poor. They haven't got money."

"Isn't that the same thing?"

Torquil looked at her. "Oh no! Something quite different."

They were now very late for lunch and hurried to get to the Western Isles hotel as soon as possible. For Joan it was very like stepping back into her own world after a dream journey to unknown parts, although the hotel was smaller than the great edifices to which she was accustomed.

But she was far from being at her ease. She could not understand what was happening to her, except that it was something to do with this quiet, broad, serene Scotsman who was treated like a king and behaved like a simple gentleman. She found herself more and more frequently seeking his face, watching for that special smile of his, taking pleasure in his clear-eyed gaze and modest, easy manner. And the effect was to produce a great unrest inside her, an urge to run away and . . . and to swim across to Kiloran and Robert, if there were no other way.

It was obvious that he hadn't much money, and she remembered reading that most of the Scottish lairds were poor nowadays. His words came back to her and she hastened to correct her own thoughts. Poor in money she meant. It was true enough that he showed no signs of being poor in any other way.

They made straight for the dining-room in the hotel. It was deserted, owing to their lateness. As they were about to go in Joan halted and turned to Torquil. She was nervous and brought out the words quickly.

"I should like to ask you something."

"Anything."

"Do you mind if we sit at separate tables? You understand, don't you?"

He was taken aback at first and then smiled quietly.

"Of course I don't mind. We are strangers . . . not even properly introduced."

"You do understand, though, why I'm asking you?"

His smile deepened but there was admiration as well as mockery in his voice when he said: "I think you are the most proper young lady I have ever met."

Joan did not quite know what to make of this but she lifted her chin and said: "I take that as a compliment."

She went into the dining-room and sat down at a table with a fine outlook over the bay and the Sound of Mull. Torquil followed slowly, and scrupulously chose a table on the other side of the room by a side window that gave him a stirring view of the hotel's fire-escape. Luncheon commenced.

* * * * *

They spent the rest of the day together exploring Tobermory. Apparently Joan's sense of propriety did not prevent her from being seen out with Torquil, and he was appropriately grateful.

That night she sat at a table in her room staring in front of her. She was in her dressing-gown, there was a fountain pen in her hand, and an unfinished letter to her father lay on the table before her. She re-read for the tenth time the few lines she had written.

"Daddy darling,

You thought that you had a grown-up daughter who knew her own mind and could manage without anybody's help. Oh, darling, I wish . . ."

She did not know how to go on. The curtains billowed in the wind which was as strong as ever. She shivered and decided the letter must go unfinished. Slipping off her dressing-gown she got into bed. Lying back on the soft pillow she closed her eyes.

"Please God . . ." she began in a faint whisper. Then she opened her eyes again and looked up at the ceiling. No, there were no beams. "Please stop the gale . . ." There was anguish and fear in the prayer. "I *must* get to the island to-morrow . . . You know that I must . . ."

But while she prayed she put her faith in the fact that there were no beams to count.

CHAPTER SIX

COLONEL BARNSTAPLE took an early look at the weather the following morning but it was not difficult to see that the storm was still at its height. Waves swept over the skerries, and the House cowered into the hillside to escape from the wind. The waterfall, in full spate, was

being blown violently back up the cliff as the Colonel in enormous oilskins, groped his way into the telephone box. He rang the Western Isles hotel and was soon speaking to Torquil who had also risen early.

If the Colonel normally tended to shout, he positively bellowed now, in competition with the waterfall.

"It's blowing great guns! The wind's shifting all the time. It's gone from south-west right round to north-west since daylight! Where is it now? Blowing from every point of the compass at once! Ruairidh says that if it settles in the north-west . . . but you know all that better than anybody!"

Torquil was speaking from the hotel manager's office. Before going on he carefully closed the door to avoid being overheard.

"Now listen, Colonel," he said seriously. "You're going to get into trouble. Some of the shepherds are complaining that a big bird is killing their lambs and carrying them off . . ."

Barnstaple listened with difficulty. "Eh? What? Speak up, there's a good chap! What? Big bird, my foot! It's my eagle!"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you," Torquil said, patiently. "They're after it with shot-guns."

There was a positive explosion in the telephone box.

"Ignorant clods!" the Colonel shouted, furiously. "If they touch a pin-feather on old Torquil I'll gore them! I've christened him Torquil. You don't mind, do you, dear chap? He reminds me of you! As for this outrageous accusation, I shall refute it! If lambs are missing, ten to one it's a fox or a wild-cat! Every village bumpkin firmly believes that eagles fly off with school-children carrying satchels on their backs, bullocks . . . anything! Absolute poppycock!"

"All right, all right," Torquil interrupted. "Talk it over with Catriona. Don't do anything rash. And ring me to-night. Good-bye."

The Colonel left the telephone box in a rage which he vented by shaking his fist at the offending waterfall. Torquil hung up his receiver. He still seemed in remarkably high spirits for a laird who was being prevented from returning to his ancestral glens. About to leave the manager's office, he noticed a scribbled note on a pad beside the telephone. It read: "236—Robinson", and it was garnished with an elaborate doodle. He felt that it was something he ought to know about but couldn't quite place the association.

In the passage he ran into Peigi, the maid, a local girl.

"Hullo, Peigi!"

"It's an awful pretty day, Kiloran."

"It is. Is Miss Webster about?"

"She's away."

It was absurd the fear that clutched at his heart. "Away, where?"

"She was away with Iain Josaiph's car before eight o'clock. They went to Erraig. Then she came back here, used the telephone and was away in the car again."

"Where to?"

"I couldn't be knowing that, Kiloran. Iain is not back yet."

She used the telephone! Now the significance of the scribbled note came back to him. "The only people worth while knowing around here," he murmured, and was as annoyed as he ever allowed himself to be.

He went out and took a walk round the bay. What was he to do about this wilful girl whose values were so mixed, who seemed confident of the way she was going, and yet who did not understand the elementary ingredients for happiness? Her conversation over the radio telephone had been sufficient to convince him that she was not truly in love with the "Rich Man of Kiloran", although he did not doubt that she thought herself in love. If she had been a mere fortune-hunter he, Torquil, would have had no interest in her, but to him it was so obvious that she was not that type of girl at all. It was exasperating! She didn't even seem to understand her own true nature!

The problem was insoluble apparently, however much he thought about it. What was to be done? He could only go on pegging away, with every advantage on the other side, and hope for the best. Because, of course, he was hopelessly and entirely in love with her. It had begun in Catriona's place that first night, or even earlier perhaps during those few moments on the path, when God knows he had seen much more of her wilfulness than of her charm! But she was the girl for him, that he knew with a conviction that left no room for asking himself silly questions about the seriousness of marriage and all that. But he had so little to offer her, according to her standards, and so little time in which to change those standards. And yet it was like a little miracle the way the storm kept up and prevented them crossing to Kiloran. To think that he should ever be glad to be kept from Kiloran! It only showed what love could do to a man!

The image of her was very strong in his mind's eye—those lovely short curls, the soft contours of her face, the way she had of laughing with her whole being, that occasional perplexity that claimed her face when she was trying to adapt herself to some unfamiliar aspect of this life of the islands, a perplexity that gave her an absurdly childlike appearance. He loved all these things, and if she were not for him, well, then he could not imagine any girl being for him.

So she had gone to the Robinsons—the only people worth knowing! It was a very, very depressing thought. And it left him with a whole day to fill in alone. In his present mood there was only one person he could imagine wanting to see. Yes, he would pay a visit to Achnacroish.

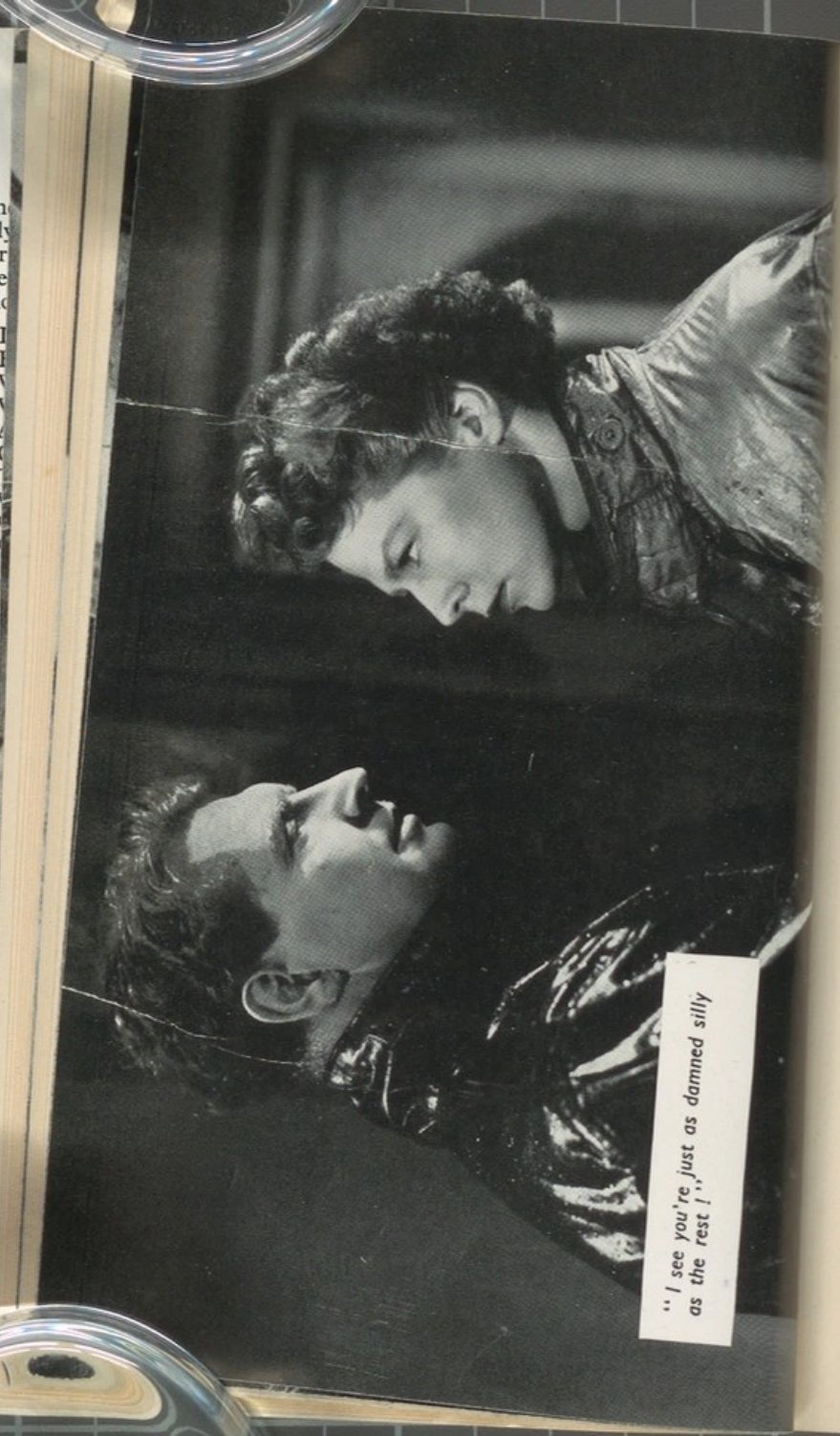
* * * * *

Iain's car drew up before the Castle of Sorne and Joan alighted. The Castle held a magnificent, commanding position on the edge of a bluff, overlooking the sea and across to Ardnamurchan. Wild and romantic, it was in much better condition than most of the old Scottish castles. An integral part of the Scottish scene, many of the castles had passed into decay and ruin with the impoverishment of the lairds. At one time they had been the stages of bloodthirsty

"It's going to be a grand Ceilidh!"

Ruairidh Mor presides at the Ceilidh.

"Do you think you could dance an eightsome reel?"



"I see you're just as damned silly as the rest!"

battles and rebellions. Later, they reflected the solid, polished mahogany days of Victorian splendour. Now most of them were only splendid in the pride that was almost their only support. Some of their owners carried on, as Catriona Maclaine carried on, refusing to part with a centuries old tradition. Others bowed to circumstances and hired out their stately old homes to the people who now had the money. And at least they had the satisfaction of seeing some of that money spent on the upkeep of fine buildings.

Sorne had suffered this fate, which was why it did not look neglected like the House at Erraig. The Robinsons were not the types to live as modestly as Catriona lived.

Joan was let in by an imposing English butler who conducted her to the breakfast room where the family was shortly to be expected. Judging from its size, the room must have been an old banqueting hall. Down its centre stretched a long, oak table, elaborately laid for breakfast. Joan could only once remember having seen a table as large—in the boardroom of Consolidated Chemical Industries where, indeed, everything was on a colossal scale.

Great deep windows in the high stone walls let in bursts of sunlight and afforded a view of the movement of sea and sky. The walls were mostly bare but were decorated here and there with old Scottish standards, swords and firearms. Two spaniels lay sleeping on a rug. The butler supervised the arrangement of the breakfast dishes on a large sideboard—a breakfast that was a triumph over the exigencies of rationing.

Joan sat down on a window seat and waited. The first arrival was Cheril Robinson, a child of about eight. She came in without noticing the visitor. Her unamiable expression was not improved by large, very modern, horn-rimmed glasses and a dreamy, sleepwalking manner that was apparently intended to indicate a mind concentrated upon higher things. The butler hovered over her with a plate as she examined the dishes and turned up her nose at them.

"Eggs and bacon . . ." the butler prompted. "Fried spam . . . mushrooms on toast . . ."

Looking up, Cheril caught sight of Joan.

"Who's she?" she demanded.

The butler coughed. "Miss Webster has called to see Mrs. Robinson."

Cheril threw an invitation in the general direction of Joan.

"Can I offer you anything, Miss Webster?"

Joan walked over to her. "No thanks. I've had breakfast."

There was a pause while Cheril helped herself to mushrooms.

"Are you Joan Webster?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to marry Sir Robert Bellinger?"

"Yes." There was something in the child's tone that made her add: "Do you mind?"

"I don't mind. He's rich isn't he?"

It wasn't difficult to follow the way Cheril's mind worked.

"I haven't counted his money," Joan said.

"Are you rich?"

Joan had never wanted to kick anyone more. But she restrained herself and, instead, caught the butler's eye. He could not have looked more apologetic if the child had been his own. Clearly he shared Joan's desire and had probably done so for a long time.

There were voices in the hall and three people entered, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson and their chauffeur, Martin, who was in livery. Mrs. Robinson was a fussy, rather silly woman, but well-meaning; her husband was quiet and uninspired. They were both in the thirties.

Martin was saying: "Excuse me, madam, may I have the afternoon off?"

"Now Martin, that's too bad of you!" Mrs. Robinson exclaimed. "You know Mr. Robinson has to attend that Home Guard meeting at Aros. And it fits in with my plan of coming back by Achnacroish. We're playing bridge with Mrs. Crozier."

"I see, madam. Then that's quite all right."

"Why is it 'quite all right'," Mr. Robinson asked, suspiciously.

"I wished to spend the evening at Achnacroish myself, madam," Martin explained.

"What, you?" Mrs. Roberts shrilled. "What do you mean, Martin? Has Mrs. Crozier asked you to make a fourth?"

This produced an amused whinny from her husband. Neither appeared aware of any lapse of taste.

"No, madam. I am invited by Mr. Campbell, Mrs. Crozier's head gardener, to a Ceilidh. It's his diamond wedding."

This disposed of the matter and Mrs. Robinson had time to notice Joan. She did so with exaggerated surprise.

"Adam! Surely you told me Robert was coming to breakfast?"

This sort of thing was nothing new to her husband. "I told you that Robert's fiancée was coming to breakfast, and here she is! You must excuse Mrs. Robinson's morning chatter, Miss Webster. 'The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds,' you know!"

His wife swept forward. "But this is wonderful! My dear, we're going to be such friends! That man woke me up when the telephone went and mumbled something. I'd no idea you were on your way or I'd have been down in a flash! What did Robert say your name was? Though we shall so soon be calling you Lady Bellinger that it's hardly . . ."

"Her name's Joan Webster," Cheril said languidly, making the name sound even plainer than it was. The remark brought upon her the attention of her mother, who swooped down, embraced her, and cried: "Good morning, Cheril darling! *You*, of course, know everything!"

"If only we'd known you were stranded here," she went on. "You've brought your luggage, of course. Hooper, have the blue guest-room opened for the future Lady Bellinger."

Joan made an effort to counter this proposal.

"It's very nice of you, but . . ."

"Say no more!" Mr. Robinson interrupted. "Now let me look at you. After all, I am one of Robert's oldest friends and you are going to be his wife!"

Under his examination, Joan, who knew she ought to play up to the best of her ability, could only glare with annoyance.

"Yes!" he cried, playfully. "You pass! With honours!"

"Which reminds me," his wife said. "We need a fourth at bridge. Do you play?"

"No." Joan said, more coldly than she had intended.

Mrs. Robinson made no attempt to hide her astonishment at this backwardness. "Oh, this generation! Mind *you*, Cheril plays, but we're not in her class. She says we play a stingy game, don't you, Cheril?"

Her daughter was eating and ignored her mother who seemed accustomed to this treatment and substituted another question.

"Are you coming with us to see Aunt Crozier, darling?"

"That depends," Cheril said, surlily.

"Now, Cheril, that's too bad of you! You promised! Daddy's a witness!" She turned back to Joan. "We were going to Kiloran yesterday. Or was it the day before? No, it was yesterday. We're the only outsiders invited to the wedding! Outside Kiloran, I mean. But should I have said that? Perhaps it's unlucky."

"Aren't you having any breakfast?" Cheril demanded. "It's nearly lunch-time."

"But, of course."

Joan again excused herself from the meal and the others breakfasted, Mrs. Robinson keeping up a running commentary all the time upon the neighbourhood in general and the difficulty of getting four people together to play bridge.

After breakfast Joan was taken for a drive and was compensated a little for Mrs. Robinson's inanities by the magnificence of the scenery. Although there were few trees to be seen on Mull, the island seemed to have everything else: mountains and lochs of dignified grandeur; engaging little streams which she was told teemed with salmon; sheep, goats and deer herding among the hills and bushes; black cattle and horses which, although low in size, were sprightly and friendly; an abundance of wild fowl, including ptarmigan and fine hawks; and an occasional chapel or old fort living in the past.

Lunch was a trying meal, with Joan resolving over and over again that she must persuade Robert to see as little as possible of the Robinsons. But in the back of her mind all the time was the gnawing thought that perhaps these were the kind of people he liked. After all Mr. Robinson had said he was one of Robert's oldest friends, and Robert had described them as "the only people worth while knowing around here."

In the afternoon they set off in the car again for Achnacroish and Mrs. Rebecca Crozier. She gathered that the latter was elderly and, according to Mrs. Robinson, "quite a character". This description gave her some hope that she would not be too like the Robinsons,

although Mrs. Robinson might be called "quite a character" too.

They arrived at dusk. Achnacroish was enormous, dwarfing even the Castle of Sorne, and seemingly big enough to house a whole clan. Martin jumped out and pulled the bell. Nobody else attempted to get out since Martin had not yet performed the manual task of opening the car door for them.

"Rebecca lives in the past," Mrs. Robinson informed Joan. "Ten thousand acres of useless land . . ."

"Fifteen thousand . . ." Cheril corrected. .

"Fifteen thousand acres . . . all mountains and bogs, a house big enough for a lunatic asylum, and no money. She has one gardener and one old man-servant. You'll see, she'll open the door herself! Is anyone coming, Martin?"

"I think I can hear someone, madam."

Martin came forward and opened the door so that they were able to get out.

"Where will you be, Martin?" Mrs. Robinson asked, managing to convey the impression that it was rather selfish of him to go enjoying himself. "Where is the Ceilidh?"

"In the big barn, madam."

"You'll have to take Miss Webster to Tobermory later to fetch her things."

Joan intervened, firmly this time. "Really, I think I'd better stay at the hotel to-night."

"Well, anyway, Martin, you'll have to take Miss Webster to Tobermory."

The great door of Achnacroish now opened to reveal a stately old lady with grey hair and fine clear-cut features. She was dressed in quiet, dark, rather old clothes.

"How are you, my dears," she said. "Come in! Come in!" A very ancient gillie, wearing a kilt, hovered behind her.

They went into a huge stone entrance hall, lit by a flickering gas-lamp. Beyond, the hall widened and contained a full-size billiard table piled with every kind of useless object. Stags' heads hung on the walls, and there were stuffed animals and trophies everywhere. Clearly, this was not one of the castles that were hired out.

"I am so sorry to keep you waiting," Mrs. Crozier said. Her voice had a lovely, low, vibrant quality that instantly endeared her to Joan. She sent the gillie to light the lamp, kissed Mrs. Robinson and Cheril, and then turned to Joan.

"And who is this charming young lady?"

"This is Joan Webster, Rebecca, who is going to marry Robert Bellinger."

Joan received the kindliest of glances. "Congratulations, my dear! Put down your things everybody. Anywhere. You see, my dear, I can't get servants nowadays. In peacetime I used to keep a butle and a cook, as well as Murdoch."

"How on earth could you manage with three people in a hou this?" Mrs. Robinson asked.

"I always had a great many guests," the old lady explained.

"But guests make work!"

"Not my guests," Mrs. Crozier said, with a twinkle. "I have a guest just now. He's getting the tea."

She opened a service door and they all trooped through, into a passage of what had once been the servants' quarters. A row of rusty old bells hung on the wall. For a moment Joan was reminded of the large ear-rings hanging from Mrs. Robinson's ears. Suddenly a man in a kilt swung out of the kitchen, carrying a large tray.

"Look, isn't he helpful?" Mrs. Crozier exclaimed, delightedly. "In the housekeeper's room, Torquil! We usually have tea downstairs, it saves such a lot of trouble."

Joan stared at the vanishing figure of Torquil and drew a deep breath. She had endured the boredom of the Robinsons in order to avoid proximity to him, and now . . .

They all followed in the direction Torquil had taken, down the flagged passage. In the housekeeper's room, Murdoch had drawn the curtains and lit the lamp. The table was laid for tea and was lit by three candelabra, relics of Mrs Crozier's richer days, as also were the silver tea-things. Torquil set down the tea-pot on a tray and generally appeared to be very much at home. Mrs. Crozier performed the introductions.

"Torquil, these are friends of mine who have taken Sorne. Torquil is in the Navy. He is on leave now. His dear mother was my best friend. This is the English Family Robinson, and this is Joan Webster."

"How do you do, Miss Webster?" Torquil said, composedly, and without batting an eyelid.

"How do you do?" Joan said faintly.

They sat down and began tea.

"Do you know, Torquil," Mrs. Crozier said, "this young lady is going to be the mistress of your house for the duration?"

"I hope you will be very happy there," Torquil said, soberly.

"I'm sure I shall."

"Are you the owner of Kiloran?" Mrs. Robinson asked, swallowing a mouthful of cake quickly in her excitement. "Really? How interesting! Do you know we nearly took Kiloran ourselves but we found it a little too expensive. Your Agent asked an enormous rent for it."

Torquil smiled deprecatingly. "I'm afraid that's the only income I ever have from Kiloran. You see, for three years' rent I can live there myself for six. That's Highland economics!"

"Well, it's no use letting my house," Mrs. Crozier said, "because I shan't live to enjoy the money I'll get for it."

Torquil stood up and with a charming gesture kissed her on the cheek. "You'll outlive us all," he cried. "Achnacroish is a breeding-place for Methuselahs! Look at Campbell!"

"Is that your gardener who's giving the Ceilidh? Martin's invited."

"It's Campbell's diamond wedding," Mrs. Crozier explained. She looked at Joan. "Quite a start on you, my dear."

"I'll catch up," Joan said, but could not avoid meeting Torquil's eyes for a moment.

"Have you ever seen Highland dancing?"

Joan shook her head.

"You ought to see our Oban Gathering in peace-time. Of course, it's not as big or as famous as Braemar or Inverness but it has its own quality. You came through Oban?"

"Yes," Joan said. "The harbour is beautiful . . . and that lovely green island . . ."

"Then imagine it full of yachts, big and small. There's racing and Highland games all day, and in the evening they always give a ball . . ." Rebecca Crozier's whole face seemed to soften and to come alive as she remembered the past and its glories. Her beautiful, resonant voice went on: "Ah! It's a wonderful sight! The Assembly Rooms are hung with special hangings in dark red; and all the women who have tiaras wear them; and the place blazes with jewels. But the men . . . the men are more splendid than the women . . . with their velvet doublets and their scarlet waistcoats and their lace cuffs and jabots, and their buttons of gold and silver, and cairngorms, and their buckled shoes, and their feile-beags of every shade and colour! And the pipes play and we dance . . . we dance all night till the sun shines through the curtains!"

The men are more splendid than the women! Joan watched Torquil's proud, dark face and understood. "Lovely," she breathed. "What does 'feile-beag' mean?"

"It's the kilt," Torquil said. "It really means 'the little kilt', as it's worn these days."

The old lady's voice and the charm of her words had built up a glowing atmosphere within the room that only Mrs. Robinson could want to break. She did so.

"Now what about bridge?" she said, briskly. "Joan doesn't play. Do you play, Mr. Macneil?"

His hesitation was so brief that nobody noticed it.

"I'm sorry. No," he said, and looked away.

He didn't appear sorry at all. Mrs. Crozier, who had known him since he was a boy, glanced at him in astonishment and opened her mouth to speak, but closed it again. After all, it was none of her business if Torquil had suddenly forgotten how to play cards.

CHAPTER SEVEN

For thousands of years the people of the Highlands have met around their peat fires to sing songs and tell tales that have been handed down from generation to generation. In old times the peat fire was in the middle of the floor and early comers formed a ring round it, later comers a second ring, and still later comers a third ring, and so on, until the kitchen would be full of peat reek and folk. It was of such

an occasion that a young man said: "The blessing of God be on the peat reek for it enabled me to kiss Kirsty three times last night, and her mother never noticing us at all!"

These informal gatherings were called Ceilidhs (pronounced Kayleys) and they are still held in the kitchens of the Highlands, but when there is dancing they take place in the barn. There is much eating and drinking, but above all there are dancing and singing and piping and laughter and happiness, and the true spirit and history of Scotland, the most simple, exciting and beautiful expressions of Highland sentiment. But also there is sadness, especially in some of the most favoured songs, because a Ceilidh is a part of life and life is often sad.

It was not easy for Torquil to persuade Joan to go to the Campbell's Ceilidh, but he received much support from Mrs. Crozier and that turned the scale. Joan was reaching a stage where she was afraid to be alone with Torquil. The only defence she could think of was to keep away from him and to get to Kiloran as soon as the weather would relent and let her go.

It was raining when they left the Castle and ran quickly across the stable yard, holding an old coat over their heads. It was very dark but a little light came from the barn to guide them, in spite of the blackout. As they approached, the music and the rhythm of the Ceilidh reached them, growing louder with every running step they took.

They stopped at a large door leading into an ante-room of the barn. This was unlighted but the barn beyond was full of light and noise and smoke. The ante-room contained a conglomeration of farm implements and machinery, and a number of shadowy figures watching the show inside. Tea and sandwiches were being prepared in the kitchen and helpers frequently passed to and fro carrying trays and cups and teapots.

Joan and Torquil stood just inside the door of the ante-room and craned their necks to look into the barn.

"Can you see?" Torquil said.

"Not much."

"Come nearer."

They slipped through the shadows of the ante-room, getting more and more into the light. Torquil found a ladder going up to the loft. There were already some people standing on it but he tapped the legs of the lowest one, a boy of about fifteen, and whispered: "Will you go up a little higher? The young lady's coming up."

The boy jumped lightly down like a cat. "The lady can have my place," he said, gallantly. And then, after a scrutiny, "Excuse me, are you not Macneil of Kiloran?"

Torquil smiled. "Yes. You'll be a Campbell."

"Johnny Campbell, Kiloran! I must tell my grandfather that you're here. He'll be a proud man!"

Torquil grabbed his arm. "You'll not tell him a thing. A Macneil at a Campbell's Ceilidh!"

But the boy laughed and vanished. Again Joan was astonished at the respect accorded Torquil. How could there be such respect without money to support it? Her whole life, spent as it had been in cities, had taught her that the two things always went together in this world. How many well-learned lessons must she unlearn in these mad islands?

"You'll see better from the ladder," Torquil said, encouragingly. She climbed up a few steps and looked across to the door of the barn and into the lighted room beyond. Torquil stood a foot below her. They could see quite well now. In the barn an eightsome reel was being danced to the skirl of the pipes.

"Three pipers!" Torquil exclaimed. "There haven't been three pipers at Achnacroish since the '45!"

There were also a drum and a piano-accordion. Joan could see Martin leaping and whirling with the best of them, Sassenach though he was. And there was Kenny, and the young girl Bridie whom she had met with the cow, and Iain MacGillivray, and Peigi the maid, and the manager of the hotel. And greatest figure of all, old Ruairidh Mor, Roderick, his face aflame, waving his arms like a bull-seal in mating time. It was madness, madness . . . but a madness that slowly crept into her blood and made her heart beat faster. With wide eyes she watched, and with eyes of admiration Torquil watched her.

Young Bridie was sitting with a plump R.A.F. sergeant, one of the service men of the neighbourhood invited to join in the fun. She was flirting a little because she could see Kenny watching her. The sergeant leaned over and whispered in her ear. She giggled and saw Kenny scowl and turn away, and walk out of the barn. Instantly she was after him and caught him in the ante-room, a few yards from the ladder. He refused to turn when she coaxed him and his face was black. But when she said simply: "It's only you I love, Kenny," he swung round with a "Ye *do*?" and a face that glowed. They kissed in front of Joan and Torquil, and Torquil looked at Joan but she avoided his eyes.

The dance had changed to a schottische. Presently Joan glanced down. "I suppose we'd better go back now."

"No hurry. Do you think you could dance an eightsome reel?"

"I think so."

"Good!"

Her eyes went back to the dancing. After a while she spoke, without looking at him. "I went down to Erraig this morning."

"I know."

"I went into Moy Castle."

"Did you?"

"Shall I tell you what it looks like inside?"

"Yes, please."

"It's just as it was. There's the Keep and the Great Hall above and the House about that. I saw the Dungeon in the wall. It's awful! And on the ramparts at the top there's a Stone . . ."

"With the Curse written on it!"

"You've been inside!" she exclaimed.

"No. But I was a baby once . . . and I had a Nannie . . ."

"No!" Joan said, laughing. "Anyway, I have read it."

"It's a terrible strong Curse," Torquil said, gravely.

"Terrible."

"Now you know why Macneil dreads to enter the Castle . . ."

Someone higher up the ladder moved and caused it to shake. Joan lost her balance for a moment and half fell against him. Their lips were very near for that second of time and her hand grasped his shoulder. He put his hand up and covered hers but it was removed at once.

The dance ended and the chief piper was playing songs. He struck up "My Nut-brown Maiden."

"Listen!" Torquil said. "That's the finest song in the world. Have you ever heard it?"

"Never."

"It goes . . ." he waited for the beat of the music and whispered the words up into her face, interpreting those parts of the strange old Gaelic love-song that were translatable.

"Horroo, my nut-brown maiden,
Hirree, my nut-brown maiden,
For roh, roh, roh, roh,
You're the maid for me!"

On the last line he looked deep into her eyes. There was a long, pregnant moment between them.

Her lips parted and she tried to smile naturally.

"I think we'd better go back now. I feel a bit dizzy."

He was helping her down when a tall, old man came from the lighted barn, accompanied by the young Campbell.

"Kiloran!" he cried. "Is that yourself, sir? Is this the way to treat an old friend on the day of his diamond wedding?"

Torquil smiled with pleasure. "We didn't want to intrude, Mr. Campbell. Let me shake your hand! Here's a length of good life to you and to Mrs. Campbell!"

"Thank you indeed, Kiloran. 'Intrude,' is it? Now you and your lady must come in and meet Mrs. Campbell. And you'll have a dram wi' us."

"Please, Torquil," Joan begged urgently. "We must go back."

He gave her a long look. It was the first time she had called him Torquil.

"Ach, you can't go now," Mr. Campbell insisted. "It's going to be a grand Ceilidh, just gr-r-aand!"

"It's very kind of you," Joan said nervously. "But Kiloran knows that I must get back . . ."

"Kiloran knows nothing of the sort," Torquil said gaily.

The old man was not to be denied. "You must see the dancing, my lady . . ."

"I could see quite well from here," Joan muttered, despairingly, feeling all the time the ground slipping from under her feet.

Mr. Campbell took her arm and Torquil's, and led them towards the barn. "You can't see anything from here, my lady. We have three pipers! Three of them! Just by luck! They were ordered by the Rich Man on Kiloran but just by luck they couldn't get across. It was the gale that stopped them . . ."

Everyone was singing and beating time. Right and left people recognised Torquil as he came into the light. There were many smiles and Gaelic greetings. Clearly there was no turning back now.

"Cheer up!" Torquil whispered in Joan's ear. "They *are* your pipers!"

So Joan gave in, since there was nothing else she could do, and the side of her that had been crying out all along to forget her fears and join with these good people in their kindliness and their celebrating took command. Torquil whirled her into the new reel that had just commenced and she gave herself up to the dance, laughing and shouting with the rest, and having no care for the morrow. For Torquil it was the happiest moment of his leave. To see her as he had known she could be, to share the Highland life that he loved with her, was a glory and a triumph. Whatever happened afterwards, this was an evening neither of them would ever forget.

And as the evening wore on there was more dancing, and more of the pipers, and there was exhibition dancing by the best on Mull, and there were sad songs and gay songs, and dancing to mouth-music chanted by the whole assembly. And there was a tender little ceremony when old Mr. Campbell and his incredibly old and bowed little wife were toasted for the diamond wedding, and the tears of gratitude for friendship so choked the good old man that he could not find words to reply, and they respected his emotion and flung themselves into another dance until the wooden floor rebounded and the whole barn bounced in sympathy.

They stayed to the end and it was very late when they climbed into the car behind Martin and were driven off to Tobermory and the hotel. The dimmed headlights revealed little of the dark countryside. It was still raining. Martin switched on the light over his dashboard for a moment and the clock showed it to be ten minutes before midnight.

Joan and Torquil sat on either side of the back seat, isolated from one another and from the rest of the world. They were smoking—Joan for safety. After a long time, Torquil said: "Did you mind me taking you to the dance?"

"No." Her voice was very low and troubled.

"I thought you might enjoy it."

"I did."

"You seemed a bit stand-offish at first. You aren't a snob, are you?"

Joan's cigarette glowed before she answered. "I don't think so."

"Are you a rich girl?"

"Must you ask silly questions?" Joan said, almost roughly.

There was silence for a while which Torquil again broke.

"You know in the Highlands roads are much worse than in England but, funnily enough, communications between people are simpler."

A series of bumps from the car emphasised his remarks.

"You're a philosopher."

"No. An engineer. D'you know which is going to be the greatest country for engineers? Canada. That's where I think I'll go when the war's over. It's a fine country. Just like the Highlands."

"Why is it that you Scotsmen never stay at home?"

Torquil laughed. "Go into any of the houses, you'll see the answer—large, vigorous families!"

"Isn't there room for all of you?"

"Ah! But we all want to be first, you see!"

"Robert says that wherever you go in the world you meet Scotsmen, clever Scotsmen."

"What else did he tell you?"

"He said that Scotland will need clever Scotsmen after the war. And at *home!*"

Torquil thought about this. "He's got something this Robert of yours."

"He has."

The car stopped before the revolving doors of the hotel. The rain was slight now and the wind was blowing it like a mist. Martin jumped out and opened the car door. They got out. "Thank you, Martin."

Joan was just going in when Martin said: "Excuse me, miss, and you sir, may I be allowed to mention that you were the best dancers at the Ceilidh . . ."

In a low and hurried voice, and already moving away, Joan muttered: "Thank you very much. Good night."

"Thank you *very* much, Martin," Torquil said, slipping him a note. "Good night."

"Oh, thank you, sir. Good night."

Joan went straight to her room and, without putting on the light, groped her way to the bed and slipped down to her knees with her head buried in the counterpane.

"Please, please, God," she implored. "You know how important it is for me to get to the island . . . please . . .!"

She was answered by the wind rattling the window.

CHAPTER EIGHT

But the gale still blew strongly next day. In the boat-shed at Erraig, Bridie was washing out the inside of her father's motor-boat. She had just sent Kenny for a bucket of water and he was struggling back against the wind. Bridie knelt in the boat, her skirt caught up around her waist, waiting for him and humming: "My Nut-brown Maiden."

Kenny came in and, without interrupting her song, she took the water, nodding her thanks. He wanted her to look at him but she turned to her work at once, scrubbing vigorously. Climbing into the boat he resumed his own work—cleaning the plugs of the engine. He kept staring longingly at her and felt foolish when she glanced up and caught him at it. Then they both began to laugh—with pure happiness. The memory of the previous night was strong with both of them.

Joan and Torquil came in together and there were greetings all round. The four were old friends now, after the Ceilidh. There was a pleasant smell of the sea in the boat-shed, and nets and tackle were stacked against the walls. Joan and Torquil made themselves comfortable.

"Wind's tacking a bit," Torquil remarked.

"It's not blowing near so hard," Kenny said. "Och, yes, to-morrow we'll be crossing. Or maybe the day after."

"Not to-day?" Joan asked.

"Himself is going to Tobermory by the bus, to see the dentist," Bridie said.

"Tooth aching this morning?"

"No. But if he does not go now there is no saying when the next gale will be. It's only then himself has the time."

To Joan this sounded as though they might cross to-day but for Roderick's tooth.

"How old are you, Bridie?" Torquil asked.

"I'll be seventeen."

He winked at her. "You'll be marrying soon."

Bridie laughed. "When the right man comes along."

"How old are you, Kenny?" Torquil asked, pointedly.

Kenny's voice was gruff. "Eighteen."

"Getting on. You aren't thinking of taking a wife?"

There was despondency in Kenny's answer. "I'll be called up soon. But in any case I'll have to wait another three or four years. Or even more."

Joan, who liked Kenny, joined in. "Why is that?"

"It takes money to get married."

"Much?" Joan asked.

"Twenty pounds," Kenny said, impressively.

Torquil acted impressed. He whistled and said nothing.

"Himself is asking that for a half share in the boat," Bridie explained.

"Who is himself?" Joan asked, puzzled.

The reply came simultaneously from Bridie and Torquil.

"Father!" "Ruairidh Mor!"

Torquil said slyly: "I should have thought Ruairidh would give the half share as a wedding-present to Kenny."

Bridie was emphatic now. "When Kenny can buy half he'll get the other half for nothing, right enough."

The door of the boat-shed was open and, fastened back loosely

to the wall by a short length of rope, beat a constant tattoo in the wind. Roderick now entered, dressed for Tobermory in all his antique splendour, from brown boots to grey felt hat. He cast an awful eye upon the idle youngsters who fell to work again at once.

"A fine day to you, my lady. A fine day to you, Kiloran."

"I wish it was," Joan muttered.

"Ach, it will be." He went to the door and examined the signs. "Yess, yess, it will be." He grasped his hat as the wind lifted it from his head. "I am not saying that it is not blowing as strong now as ever, but it's near the end of it. Indeed it is like the sun—always seems biggest just before it sets!"

"You're a poet, Ruairidh Mor!"

"Do you think we can cross to-day?" Joan asked, urgently.

"No, my lady." That terrible certainty of his was unnerving.

"Well, will you stand by all day in case it drops?" Joan hurried on as he opened his mouth: "I'll pay for your time. You said yourself you don't know when it will drop. I must get across! It's very important! I'll pay anything you ask . . ."

The dignity of the old man was past belief. He seemed to grow even larger as he said: "I'll take you to Kiloran as soon as it's humanly possible, and I do not need extra payment for that!"

Joan stared at him, defeated and humiliated. The youngsters worked industriously but listened to every word. Torquil took Joan's arm and led her away. "We'll be up at the House," he called back over his shoulder.

"Ach! And I will be at Tobermory!" Roderick exclaimed, as they disappeared into the wind. "Fine doings, indeed! That girl is so foolish, indeed, she is a woman already!"

Outside the wind caught them and flung spray over them as they fought their way along. Torquil tried to ignore the scene in the boat-shed and bellowed small-talk into her ear.

"There are no flies on Ruairidh! He wants Kenny to marry Bridie, but he doesn't mean to hand her to him on a plate."

There was no answer from Joan who was deep in thought. Torquil glanced sharply at her and did not speak again until they reached the House. Here they were met by the deer-hounds who welcomed them with deep, bass barks. They went in and Joan sat down by the fire.

Catriona called from the kitchen. "Who is it?"

"The islanders!"

She appeared in the doorway. "Stay for lunch! Curried rabbit! The Colonel's doing it, à la Poona!"

"Good!" Torquil exclaimed, with an excess of heartiness that made Catriona see at once that there was something in the air. "Hullo, Joan," she said, with a quick smile, and disappeared again.

"Torquil!" Joan said, suddenly.

He hesitated and then walked over and sat near her.

"May I ask you a very great favour?"

"Yes," he nodded gravely.

She wasn't sure how to begin. She stood up and began playing with some chess-men on the table.

"Help me to get to Kiloran!"

Torquil stood up, too. He had known for some time that this was coming. He regarded her steadily.

"If I had a good sized boat . . . but I haven't. Not even a small one."

She went on quickly. "Ruairidh would listen to you. If you ask him he will try to get us over. Besides you're wasting your whole leave . . ."

"I don't mind . . ."

"Of course you do," she said, angrily. "You love Kiloran. You haven't seen it for years . . ."

"I don't mind," he repeated, very distinctly.

Joan knew she was on very dangerous ground. "You won't ask him?"

"No. You don't seem to understand. It's his job to get us across . . . if you like, his duty. If he could, he would. Can't you wait till to-morrow?"

Joan stared into the fire. Torquil's tone grew gentler.

"I can't ask him to risk his life. Or yours."

"He's been out in gales before! Suppose a ship were in danger!"

"That's different! When people are in danger and need help . . ."

Joan muttered something in a voice so low that he could not catch it. "What?" he asked.

"I need help desperately," Joan muttered, with a sob, and turned away to the window.

Before Torquil could speak again there was a furious assault on the gong and the Colonel called violently from the kitchen: "Dressing-gong! Tiffin in five minutes!"

Joan sighed deeply. She had abandoned hope of enlisting Torquil's help. "Do you think there's any chance of the gale blowing out by this evening?" she asked, helplessly.

"I don't think so."

She picked up a book but made no attempt to read it.

"Do you think this will only be a lull? That it will start blowing again?"

"Of course that has happened. But it's very unlikely."

Colonel Barnstaple breezed in. Wearing a long apron and a felt hat he looked even more eccentric than usual. But he was in high spirits and quite oblivious of any "atmosphere" in the room.

"Hullo, chaps! Torquil, great news! Congratulate me, young lady! Torquil, the eagle, is found! His good name is cleared! It was a fox that was killing the lambs, a shepherd saw him. The old boy is roosting up on Gorrie's leap!"

"The shepherd?" Joan asked, with a smile.

"No, Torquil!" the Colonel roared. "A gillie spotted him and sent down word. He's catching rabbits, as happy as a sandboy! I mean Torquil is . . . ha-ha! Not the gillie! I'm bucketing up there with

the Lure after lunch! We'll get him back in a jiffy. Coming?"

Joan hesitated. Catriona called: "Colonel! The rice!" and he dashed out.

"We'll be back at tea-time," Torquil urged.

"I'd rather stay down here," Joan said.

* * * * *

High up on the great cliffs of Erraig, Torquil and the Colonel climbed steadily. Below them the bay, the House, the cottages, even the waves that barred the way to Kiloran were a miniature of their true selves. Torquil was not enjoying the trip as completely as he would normally have done because now full enjoyment of anything meant sharing it with Joan. But he knew how much it meant to the Colonel and this, and his pride, prevented him from turning back.

Colonel Barnstaple was in the highest pitch of excitement, bounding ahead with amazing energy. He had his tiercel, or male falcon, with him, and a pair of binoculars were slung around his neck. Torquil was wearing a thick, white polo sweater under his tweed jacket.

As a try-out, the tiercel was cast off after some small quarry the Colonel spotted on the way, but the bird lost it and was brought back by the swinging of the Lure in great circles. This Lure is the falconer's apparatus for recalling hawks, and it consists of a bunch of feathers attached to a thong. When a hawk is being trained its food is put among the feathers, and so is built up what Pavlov would call a conditioned reflex, the hawk being drawn back again by the enticing object which it has learned to associate with its food. It is used similarly with falcons and Colonel Barnstaple had achieved the triumph of applying the same technique to a Golden Eagle.

The swinging of the Lure was accompanied by whistles and strange oaths from the lore of falconry. Torquil was a very interested spectator as the tiercel plummetted to earth, but happening to glance down in the direction of Erraig House, his attention was arrested by something that he found even more important. Reaching quickly for his stalking-glass, which was slung in a bucket over his shoulder, he stared through it. He could see some strange activity around the boat-shed. Two figures in oilskins were carrying out the little motor-boat.

Torquil's lips shut tight as he put the glass away. Catriona would have recognised the black look of Kiloran Dubh and have known that his Highland temper was up. Without a word to his companion, he started off down the mountain at a break-neck pace.

The Colonel was busily hooding the tiercel. "Good boy! Good boy! Ah, you little devil, bite me, would you? You know, Torquil, there's one thing about your godson, he may hang on to me like blue murder with his big feet but he never . . ."

Suddenly he realised that he was alone. Standing upright he glanced around. Already, Torquil was a tiny figure, racing down the mountainside. "Potty . . !" the Colonel said, wonderingly. And then: "Pity . . !"

CHAPTER NINE

KENNY had the little boat in the water and was hauling up the canvas hood when Torquil came running up. He was on the defensive at once, a stubborn expression on his face.

"What do you think you're doing?" Torquil shouted, standing on the edge of the jetty and glaring down at the boy.

"I'm after taking Miss Webster to Kiloran," Kenny replied, sulkily.

Torquil made a gesture of fury. "You're after losing Ruairidh's boat and drowning the pair of you! Don't be a fool, Kenny! What did she pay you?"

"Twenty pounds!" Truculently: "Now who's the fool?"

So, a marriage was the bribe! Torquil cursed himself for starting that conversation in the boat-shed. It was a mistake to give any opening to people with no sense, no understanding of local conditions.

"I'll give you twenty pounds *not* to go!"

Kenny was astonished. He hesitated.

"Come on, boy. Give her back her dirty money!"

Kenny threw his hands down in despair. "Och, Kiloran, I can't do it! I promised! She made me promise. And that's the truth of it!"

Torquil knew there was nothing more to be done here. He turned in anger and raced off towards the House.

But someone was before him. Bridie had just entered and was looking around for Catriona. Up in Joan's room a hurried packing was going on. Catriona in a white blouse with a small leather jacket over it, was leaning against the door watching, while Joan, dressed in oilskins, arranged her things in the two suitcases. Inscrutable as Catriona's face was, Joan knew very well what she was thinking. But Joan's face was hard and set. This was her last great bid, and every ounce of that vast determination of hers was being pulled out to carry it through, to counter all the arguments and criticisms that might be brought against her. And Catriona merely stood there and looked at her, with eyes that were as deep as they were unfathomable, making no comment.

Bridie found her way upstairs and appeared in the passage behind Catriona. She had been running, her bare legs were spattered with mud, her hair had been blown loose and her whole face was dark with fear. But with it all, she retained her respect for Catriona and her slight shyness of Joan.

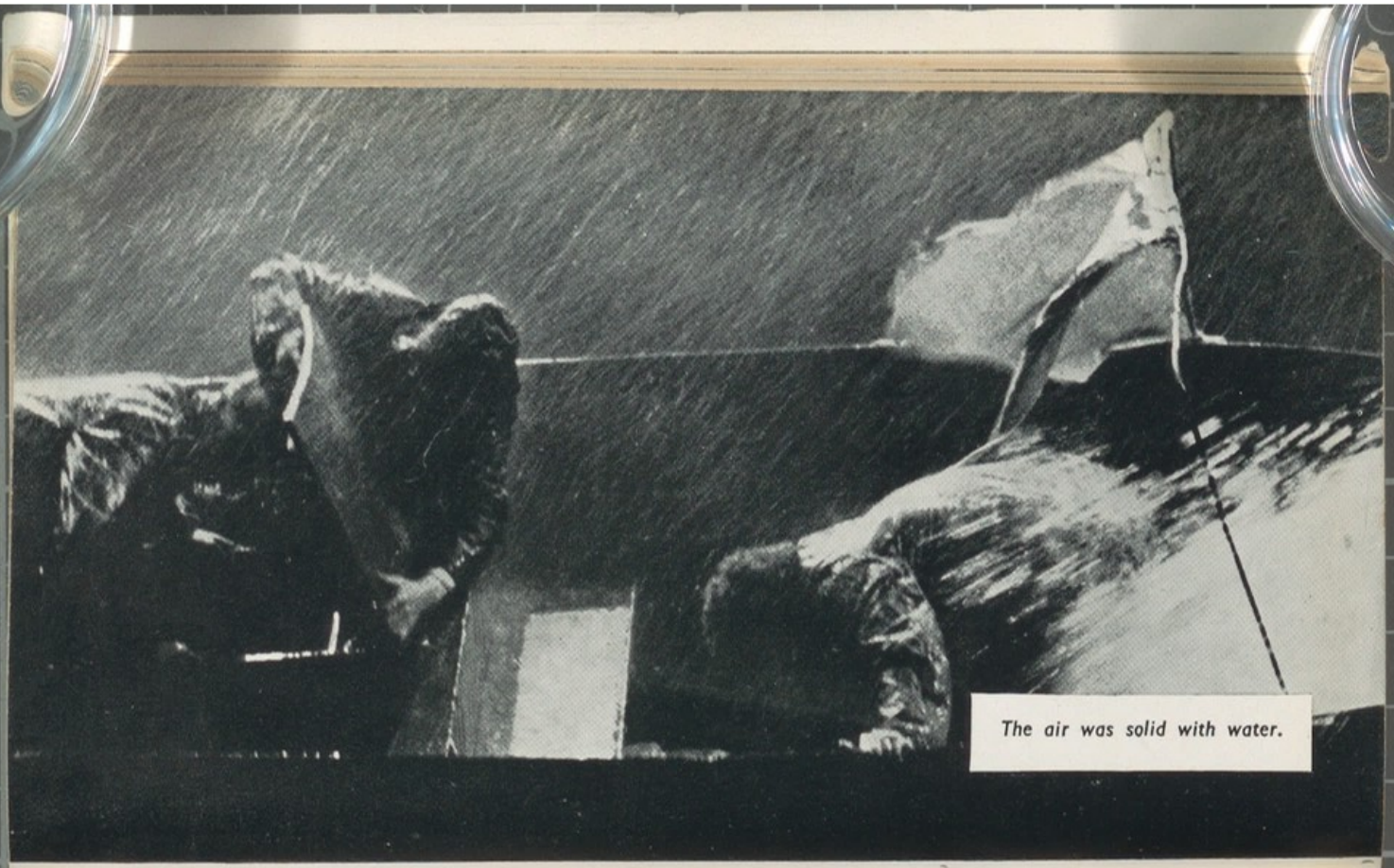
Hearing her, Catriona turned. "What is it, Bridie?"

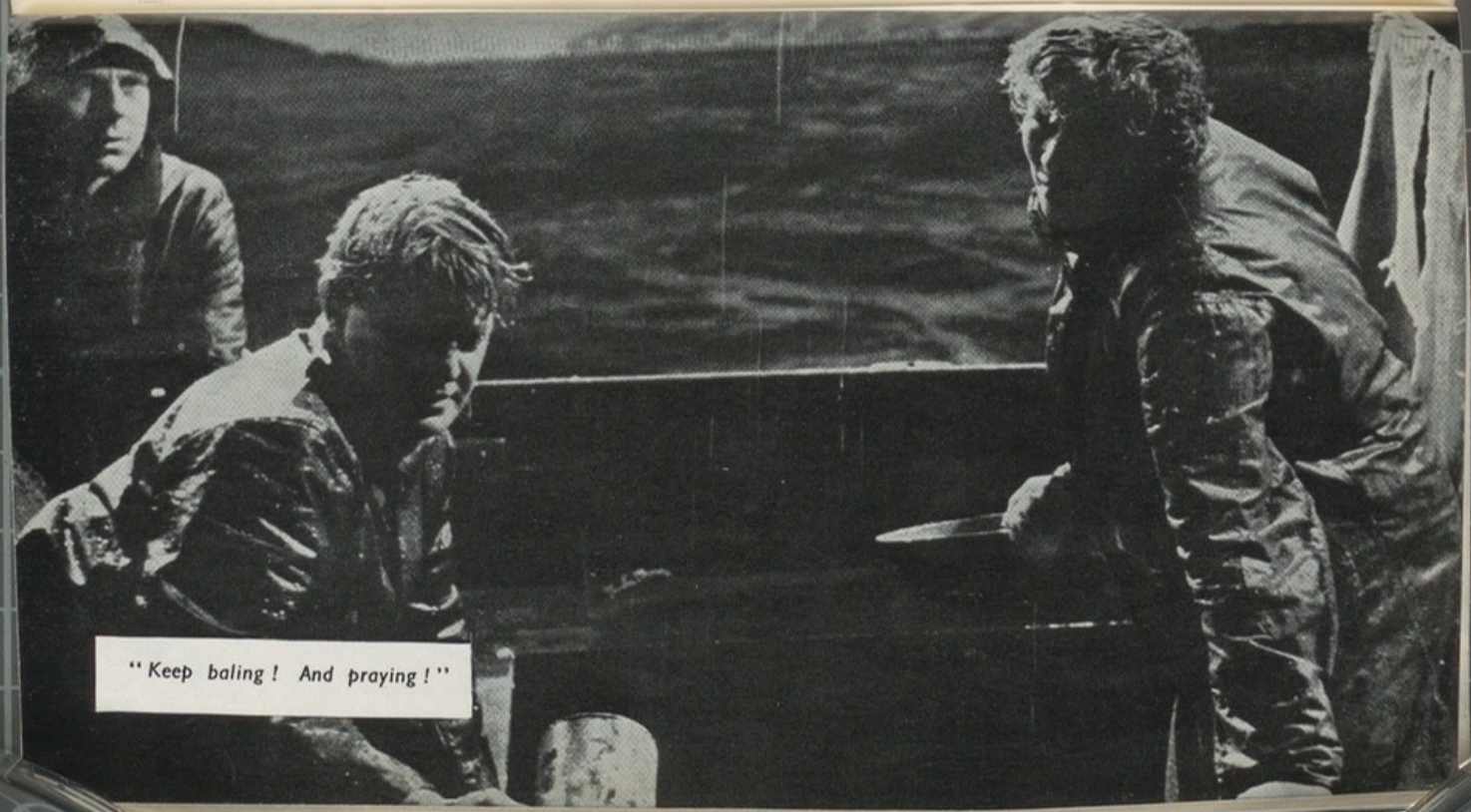
"Please, ma'am, I'd like to be speaking to Miss Webster."

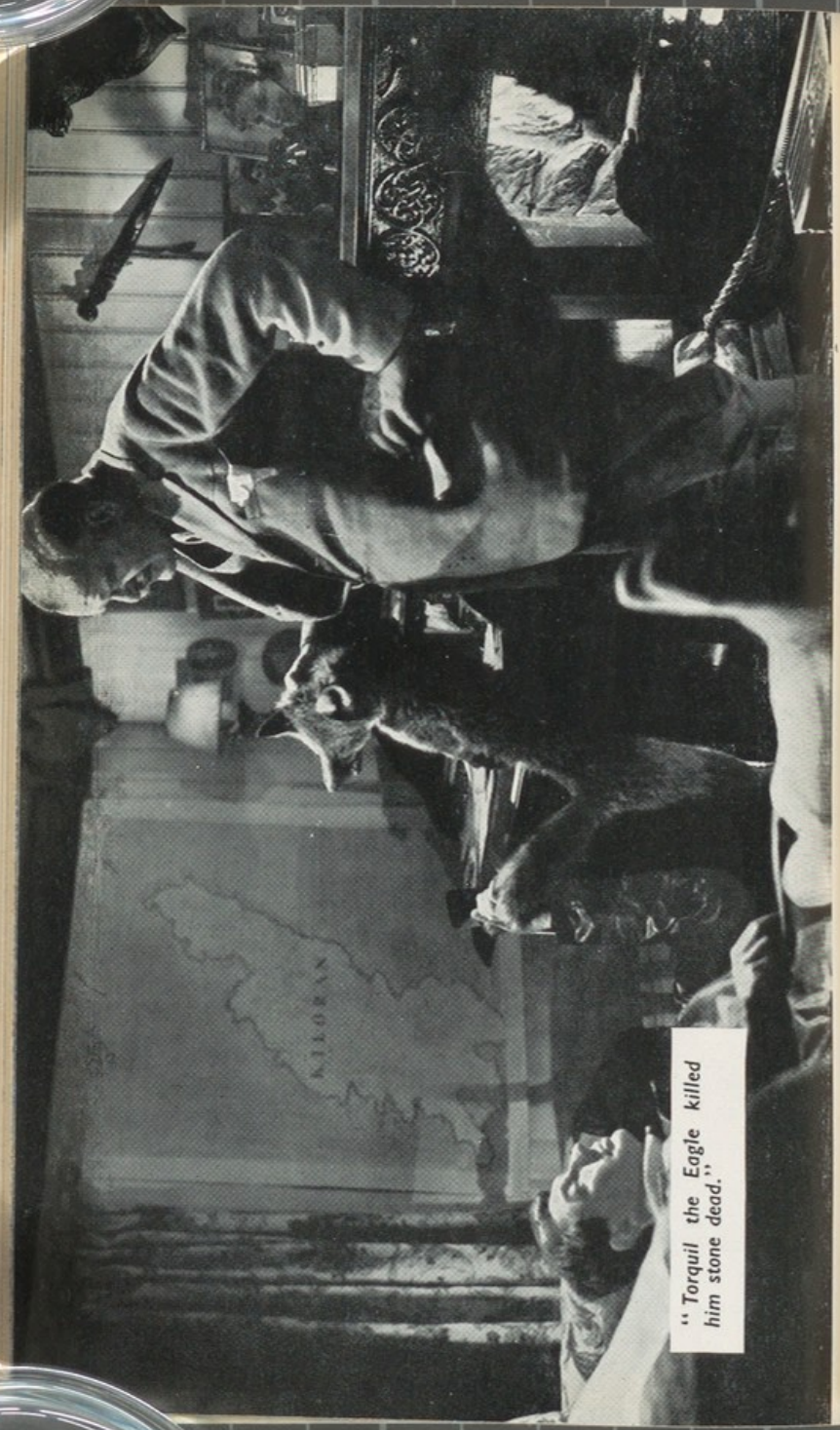
Catriona looked at Joan who had just taken her wedding-dress, still in its cellophane protection, from the cupboard and was folding it and replacing it in one of the cases.

"Bridie wants to speak to you."

Joan glanced up. "What is it?"


The air was solid with water.


"Keep baling! And praying!"



"Torquil the Eagle killed him stone dead."

"It's about the boat, miss. Don't be after taking it out, miss! Himself will murder Kenny!"

The fight had begun. Joan steeled herself.

"Nonsense. I'll make it all right with your father. Anyway, Kenny's a man, he's handled the boat alone many times."

Bridie's voice beseeched her. "But never in a gale. Himself would never take it out in a sou-westerly gale!"

"But it's blowing out!" Joan exclaimed, in exasperation. "Your father said so. It's going down all the time."

"Himself would never take it out to-day," Bridie said, doggedly.

All the time Joan was conscious of Catriona's eyes on her in a devastating scrutiny that was worse than any attack. It was not that there was criticism in them, or anger or contempt. They just looked at her, in a strangely detached and yet concentrated way, as though only interested in what she would do next.

"What about the money Kenny's going to earn?" Joan said, shifting her line of defence. "You don't want to wait another four years to marry him, do you?"

But she had no understanding of the mind of a girl like Bridie. How could she have?

"I would then . . . if it has to be," Bridie said, on the edge of tears. Her voice went lower. "But some folks there are who can't be waiting a day to satisfy their paassions . . ." Under the influence of her resentment and embarrassment her "a's" were getting broader and broader.

"*What are you saying!*" Joan exclaimed, flaring up in an unladylike but more natural manner than she had used up till now. But Bridie was past being stopped by anything. "Some folks there are who want to drown fine young men and break poor girls' hearts, all so they can be bedded the one day sooner . . ."

"You'd better get out!" Joan shouted, in a passion of anger and self-guilt. She would not have believed that anyone could speak to her like that. The very bluntness of it was an affront to all her instincts.

And still Catriona leaned against the doorway and watched.

It was Bridie's turn to shout. "I'll be getting out when I please! Who are you to be giving orders? You that come from the city with your airs and graces . . . and your heart of stone! Why should you think that our lives don't matter at all and that yours is so important!"

The strain of this long emotional outburst in English proved too much and she fell back on her own tongue. "A bhobh bhobh! A Muire Mathair! Oh, Miss Caitriona . . !" She turned and buried her head on Catriona's breast in a flood of tears and Gaelic.

Joan was touched to the heart, but fighting, fighting. She came up to them, conscious of the same steady stare from Catriona. "You don't understand! Bridie, don't cry! You think that I'm risking Kenny's life when I could stay safely here. But I'm not safe here! I'm on the brink of losing everything I wanted ever since I wanted anything . . ! Oh, Bridie, do be reasonable . . !"

She was near weeping herself, what with the wearing conflict of

the last few days, the turbulent emotions that strained at her now and the knowledge that she had lost the affection and respect of thes people she had grown to value.

But Bridie broke away and ran out of the room and down the bare, uncarpeted stairs. At the bottom she met Torquil who had come in the House like a storm. One glance at her condition, her mud-stained feet and legs and her face streaked with tears, told him something o what had happened.

"Where's Miss Webster?"

Bridie pointed upwards. "She's upstairs. Please, Kiloran, don't let her . . ."

But Torquil was already half-way up, taking the stairs in great bounds. As he reached the top the door of Joan's room opened and they met face to face. The sudden confronting of each other stilled them both for two or three seconds. His black face told her his thoughts. She tried to anticipate his words.

"I'm sorry!" she muttered, and tried to pass him. But he barred her way, and spoke through lips that were pale with anger.

"I thought you were an efficient, intelligent girl! But I see you're just as damned silly as the rest!"

It was an error of judgment, from someone in no state to make fine judgments. A simple "I love you!" was probably all that was needed at that moment, after the scene with Bridie, to break Joan down utterly. This attack had the opposite effect, gave her all the strength she needed, the strength of indignation and desperation, to go through with her plan. Her eyes flashed and she forced her way past him, her suitcases in her hands, and began the descent of the stairs.

He turned and followed her as she felt her way down with the heavy cases. At the landing he caught up and pulled her back, so roughly that she lost her balance and fell on the stairs, still clutching the cases. She stared up at him defiantly and unafraid.

"You're not going to stop me . . ." she flung at him. "You're not going to stop me . . . either by insults, or arguments, or . . . or anything else!"

Furious as he was, the sight of her at bay had a strong effect upon him. "From the first second I saw you I could see you were as stubborn as a mule . . . as obstinate as a woman . . . as dogged as a . . . as a . . !"

"Then since you've known all that for so long, what are you going to do about it?" she demanded.

There was a long and tense pause while Torquil struggled with himself. Had it been anyone else but her he would probably have resorted to physical violence to prevent what he knew to be a folly so dangerous that no one could guess its end. But it was Joan . . . the girl who in a few days had changed his whole life, and with whom he was desperately in love even now. He knew he was powerless, that he was beaten. Suddenly, all the anger, all the violence went out of him.

'Oh, do as you like," he said, wearily and sadly.

He left her on the stairs and went down into Catriona's room, pulling off his oilskins and dropping them on to a chair. Joan picked herself up and he heard her leave the House. Standing by the table, trembling slightly, he felt defeated and wretched. One of the deer-hounds came slowly over and regarded him with quiet sympathy. Absently, he patted its bony head.

Catriona came slowly and thoughtfully into the room, flashing little glances at him.

"You heard?" he asked.

"They heard you in Tobermory!" she said with a little smile.

He nodded an acknowledgment of the violence of his behaviour, which he now deeply regretted, since it had not even attained its object. She had gone, and so had his last chance of winning her. With all her stubbornness and wilfulness she was the only thing he wanted in the wide world—he who was usually satisfied with so little.

Catriona watched him with troubled eyes. She was very fond of him indeed and she knew how he was suffering. Well enough she understood what the situation was, but she had avoided interfering because that was her way. Always, she was the spectator, seeing more profoundly and wisely than most, but not trying to interfere, since human beings went their own ways and did whatever they wanted to do.

But his misery was more than she could bear, and his blindness something into which she must throw a small ray of light. She came up to the table, placed her hands on it, and leaned forward to look into his stricken face. Her wild hair fell over her shoulders and framed her strange, mystical, radiant face as though it had been planned just for that purpose.

"Torquil," she whispered, "don't you understand? It's you she's running away from!"

He started as though he had received a revelation, and his whole body tautened. A flood of light and hope and conviction swept through him. Suddenly, he knew that what Catriona said was true, that he had not yet lost, that in one sense he was nearer success than ever before. For one bewildered moment he stood stock-still, and then he flashed her a glance in which was contained all the gratitude in the world, and ran to the door, picking up his oilskins on the way. Running with all his might, he tore through the archway, out into the rain, and down the path to Erraig pier.

Kenny had just started the motor after stacking away Joan's cases under the canvas hood. Torquil ran up the jetty and without a word jumped lightly down into the boat. The very opportunity for action after the desolation of a few minues before put new life into him. Kenny was at the tiller and at once the boat began to move away from the pier. Gathering speed, and with the engine running noisily but sweetly, it sped on and began to thread its way through the skerries which lined the bay. Looking back towards land Torquil saw the solitary figure of Bridie staring out to sea

CHAPTER TEN

JOAN had witnessed Torquil's arrival in the boat with a mixture of pleasure and concern. Now that they were under way the fight had gone out of her, too. She could not bear to think of the unedifying scene a short time before and she felt that he must be completely disillusioned in her. She was in the throes of a severe reaction from her previous determination. She had done everything, short of murder, to keep to her life-long plan, and now she was in a fatalistic mood. No more action was demanded of her, she no longer knew where she was going, she was content to let the ocean currents decide something that had become too big for her.

Wedged in with her cases under the hood for'ard she watched the two men. Kenny at the tiller appeared very competent. Torquil was sizing up the conditions. After a prolonged survey of wind, tide and sky, he shrugged his shoulders, lit his pipe and adopted a fatalistic calm that Joan found reassuring.

She got up and came towards him, receiving a sardonic glance that summed up their whole situation and the events of the last half-hour, and told her that his good-humour had returned. But still they did not speak. Instead, they stood side by side, surveying the outlook ahead.

Now they were well out to sea. The wind was very strong and the boat was making heavy weather with a cross-tide, shipping a good deal of spray over the starboard side. Kenny was beginning to find that it took all his strength on the tiller to keep the boat near its course for Kiloran, and to avoid the worst of the cross-seas. There was no danger as yet but he was already imagining what it would mean to keep this up for three hours. Also he was worried by the boat's easterly drift.

Torquil had taken out a pocket-compass and was checking the course, squinting ahead and continuing to puff tranquilly at his pipe. Like most men of his type he detested unnecessary risks but once embarked upon them he was capable of anything, including enjoyment of any extension of the risks involved.

He ducked down suddenly as his knowledge of the sea anticipated a great wave that rose up before them. Joan was too late, since he had given her no warning, and received the buffet of water in her face. He grinned like a schoolboy as she shook the water off herself and wiped her streaming face with her hands. Joan said nothing but continued to stand beside him. After a while he spoke for the first time.

"Are you the praying type?"

She was glad he had broken the silence and was anxious to keep him talking. "Sometimes. Are you?"

"Always." The boat shuddered under a wave. Kenny wiped the spray out of his eyes and gripped the wheel harder.

"If we can keep on our course, and right side up," Torquil continued, "we've got a chance."

"Aren't we on our course?"

"The wind and the tide are taking us east. Every knot nearer Kiloran we're two knots nearer Scarba."

This did not tell an ignorant city girl much. "Is that dangerous?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

Torquil looked at her. "Corryvreckan!"

The grim emphasis which he gave to the name, and its own sinister reputation, chilled her.

"The whirlpool?" Torquil nodded. "You never finished the story of the Norwegian Prince. Two ropes broke . . . what happened to the rope made from the faithful maidens' hair?"

"It held until the tide turned." He looked hard at her. "Nothing is stronger than true love!"

"No. Nothing!"

"But one maiden had been untrue to her lover! One only. And when that one strand of hair broke, the whole rope broke with it!"

The sea was very rough now and they were pitching and tossing with the waves, sometimes almost vanishing in the great troughs of the sea. The wind howled murderously and whipped away the crests of the waves. The whole set of the tide carried the boat eastward towards the Gulf of Corryvreckan, between the cliffs of Scarba and Jura, a few miles away.

Kenny wrestled with the tiller. His arms were numb with the strain and he was blinded by the spray which mixed with the sweat pouring down his face. He wondered how long he could hold on and knew already that he had been very foolish. He was not a coward but the prospect before them now frightened him and he was thankful for Torquil's presence.

Suddenly, looking to the south-west, he saw a horrifying sight. Staring wildly, he let out a scream to Torquil, without taking his eyes off the new peril. Torquil heard, and saw Kenny's face. A glance told him the worst. Approaching at tremendous speed was a terrifying wall of wind and rain half a mile across. A line of foam on the sea galloped with it as the force of the wind flattened the waves. Black in the centre and with grey wings on either side the squall was rushing straight at the motor-boat like the Angel of Death, blotting out the light in its path. The clamour of the gale, powerful as it was, had to give place to the hiss of the rain and the roar of the wind, approaching at eighty miles an hour. Swiftly the sky vanished in a canopy of grey, the grey turned to black, and the roaring rim of foam came nearer and nearer . . .

Torquil shouted to Joan and pointed: "Squall!"

Joan was hanging on to the iron hoop of the canvas cover.

"Get down in the bottom of the boat!" Torquil yelled above the clamour. "Wedge yourself in under the thwart! Don't worry about anything else! Just hang on!"

She nodded and vanished under the cover. Torquil went aft in two quick rushes, hanging on to the gunwale, and joined Kenny.

Under the canvas cover Joan was carrying out her instructions and adding an idea of her own—hooking and lashing the two suitcases on to the iron structure that held the canvas. Wedged in as tightly as possible she watched the men as they faced the approaching squall. Kenny and Torquil were both at the tiller, braced for the impact. The engine thumped away regularly, occasionally racing as the screw came out of the water.

Except for the increasing howl of the rain and the wind, and the tense concentration of waiting, there was a strange calm in the boat—the traditional calm before the storm.

Nothing remained but to wait. Torquil still had his pipe in his mouth, but it was upside down and it had gone out. He found time for a last minute flicker of a smile in Joan's direction.

And then the squall hit them, and the next moment everything was confusion, destruction and disaster. The effect came with the complete suddenness of a street accident, or like a rapid, brutal attack by a skilled boxer. Smash—smash—*smash!* The squall carried everything before it and the air was solid with water until the three of them gasped for breath.

For a few moments Joan could not see the men at all. Then she had a dim glimpse of them through the sheets of rain, gasping and hanging on to the tiller. In a matter of seconds the boat was inches deep in water, and the tiny canvas drummed and wrenched at its frame. The rain, lashing the sea, flattened out the waves, but still the boat rose and fell with the swells, tossed about at the will of the storm. They made no actual progress at all, although the engine was racing at full speed.

Torquil shouted to Kenny and signalled to Joan. "Bale!" He hung on with all his strength to the tiller, keeping the boat head on, while Kenny crouched down and started to bale frantically. Joan did the same at her end of the boat, standing in a foot of water, and already drenched to the skin in spite of her oilskins. Still the squall roared over them and the boat lay very low in the water, the engine thundering and smoking.

For some time the wind had been worrying at the canvas cover. Now it succeeded in getting under a corner of it, rents appeared, and it was ripped into the air under the full force of the squall. The iron framework, well-made though it was, followed, and with it Joan's cases and everything movable. Joan grabbed at her cases desperately while the rain lashed and stung her face and hands. One of the cases burst open and the contents scattered over the Atlantic, the first item to go being her lovely wedding-dress in its cellophane envelope. It alighted like a great gull on the sea and then was gone in a flurry of foam. Caught unprotected, Joan was flung after it, still clutching the other case, and hurled against the gunwale and half over it.

Torquil, seeing her danger, abandoned the tiller without hesitation, so that it swung violently over, and fought his way for'ard, reaching

her just as she was forced to let the second case go. He hauled her into safety, and the wind knocked them both down into the deep pool of water in the bottom of the boat.

The boat had swung around away from the wind when Torquil left the tiller. The squall was now passing and Kenny went across to steer, while Torquil struggled to his knees. As the boy reached the tiller he let out a frightened cry. Torquil looked round into the wind. A heavy sea was about to break aboard from a height of some thirty feet. It was practically vertical and the top leaned forward like an overhanging cliff. From the little boat it seemed to have enormous height and to hang interminably in the air as the waterlogged vessel climbed slowly up its face, the propeller whirling madly. Then the whole of the upper part of the wave crashed down on them.

The boat was knocked over and past her beam-ends by the impact. Every remaining object was instantly swept overboard and the crew of three were lucky not to follow. Kenny did go right over the side but just managed to cling on to the gunwale, his body trailing astern. Very, very slowly the motor-boat righted itself. The engine choked and spluttered . . . and stopped!

Ignoring everything else, Joan and Torquil worked to save Kenny, dragging him over at last with their failing strength.

The squall had passed. They were in an open boat half-filled with water, with a dead engine and no oars. They were wet and exhausted, running helplessly before the wind in a six-knot tide, and heading for the most notoriously dangerous tidal-race on the coast of Scotland.

Torquil shouted to Joan: "Bale!" But there was nothing left to bale with. "No can!" she shouted back. He kicked off one of his rubber boots and she began to bale with that, still unbelievably finding a little strength left for the task. With the other boot he helped her for a little while. The situation was so desperate that he felt quite elated and light-hearted.

"Got to take the engine apart," he informed her. "It's drowned out."

"What can I do?"

"Keep baling! And praying!"

She got the water down to manageable proportions in time and then, chilled to the bone, sat huddled up, watching the two men at work on the engine. It was still raining but now a magnificent stormy sunset coloured the sky. Kenny was as near dead-beat as a boy could be—and still stay on his feet.

The lid had been taken off the engine and Kenny held an electric torch so that Torquil could see what he was doing. Soon it became necessary to keep the rain from the engine and Torquil removed his oilskin coat and called Joan to hold it up over the engine. She was very game, crawled over and stood swaying slightly and holding the coat in position. A wild coast-line could be seen to the east. Torquil, absorbed, with his hands and white polo sweater covered in oil and grease, worked methodically and unhurriedly.

And then, almost simultaneously, they began to hear a dull

roaring noise, like a great waterfall. Torquil and Kenny exchanged glances and went on with their work. Joan listened apprehensively as the noise came nearer. The water around the boat began to bubble and boil. To the east the waves were checking and meeting in the strangest manner. Some shot up in great boils, more than thirty feet high. The roaring filled the air, and very near them were the cliffs of the coast.

Torquil glanced at Joan, continuing to work as calmly and methodically as ever. "Corryvreckan!" he said.

Joan stared at the terrifying spectacle. Corryvreckan! Around the boat the water was behaving in a lunatic fashion as it tore along, twisting and turning, shooting up in gigantic boils, breaking in waves, while all the time the speed of the helpless boat increased. Nearer and nearer they approached the Race itself. The great boils shot up all around them, while the roar of the Race was deafening. And still Torquil worked quietly at the engine.

He carefully replaced the plugs, screwing them gently into position. Kenny's hand trembled as he held the light. Torquil stood up, replaced the cover and said grimly: "Now . . . *pray!*"

He bent to the crank handle and gave it a sharp jerk. Again! And to their intense relief the engine jumped to life. Quite coolly Torquil grasped the tiller, Joan moving over beside him. Kenny slumped to the boards exhausted while the engine gathered speed.

Torquil smiled at Joan. "Your credit must be good in heaven!"

"They know a real prayer when they hear it," she said, thankfully.

Under control now, the little boat headed through the dangerous Race. Like slowly oozing mud, weaving patterns of horror, the whirlpool went round and round, a great hole in its centre, as evil a sight as ever man saw. They just skirted its edges as the small engine pulled them slowly away from the face of Prince Breacain. Joan recognised the exact scene of the engraving in the coastguard-post. There were the cliffs of Scarba, the dark coast-line of Jura, the Race, the great whirlpool, with its ring of foam. But this time it had been baffled ignominiously by a six-horse-power marine engine and a cool pair of hands.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ON THE pier at Erraig it was almost dark. The last setting light of the sun lay in a thin line along the edge of the sea. The night was utterly calm, so innocent that its recent pranks were unbelievable.

Bridie sat on the wall of the jetty like a statue, facing the sea, with hope fast dying in her breast. Roderick, still in his best Tobermory clothes, paced the jetty swinging a lantern, anger and anxiety fighting for possession of his weather-beaten face.

Into their consciousness came the faint but familiar beat of the

motor-boat's engine. Bridie looked up, listened intently, and broke into a prayer of thankfulness. Roderick's expression did not change. He looked as joyful as a sphinx. Already the anger was superseding the anxiety.

They waited while the sound of the engine grew louder and louder, and then suddenly there was the boat, looming up out of the darkness. Torquil brought her alongside, in silence. Joan was curled up, stiff and exhausted. Kenny stood up, swaying, to pass the rope ashore. Roderick swung his lantern and glared down, assessing the damage and guessing what they had been through. He nodded to Torquil, ignored Joan and looked pointedly at Kenny.

The boat was fastened and the worn, exhausted three of them climbed out. As Torquil passed Roderick he said curtly: "See you in the morning, Ruairidh Mor!" The old man gave the growl of a sea-lion. His hands in his pockets, Torquil trudged off into the darkness, Joan tailing after him. Kenny and Bridie, close together, looked at Roderick.

"Into the shed!" the old man roared in Gaelic and he pointed majestically. They obeyed without question. Again Roderick surveyed the damage with his lantern, snorted and strode vengefully after them.

In the shed Bridie held Kenny in her arms. "Ah, Kenny!" she murmured. "Kenny Bhalaich!"

Roderick paused in the doorway with the air of a major prophet about to smite the children of Israel. "Go home, girl!" he said to his daughter, in a terrible voice. Bridie removed her arms from Kenny but only moved a few paces away. Roderick strode directly up to the boy who stood bravely to meet him. But as the old man's great arm swung up, with clenched fist, the last of Kenny's strength failed him and he dropped limply to the floor. Bridie flew to him.

Roderick lowered his arm and glared down at the boy in disgust. "Great Big Man!" he said, and spat, as Isaiah might have spat.

* * * * *

Torquil walked into the House whistling lugubriously. Catriona was waiting at the door of the flat from which a welcome cosiness and cheerful, warm light emanated. The return, she was thinking, makes a nice contrast to the setting forth! As Torquil passed her she gave him an enigmatic smile but made no comment. Poor be-draggled Joan brought up the rear, and Catriona put her arm around her.

"Bath and bed! There's a fire in my room and that's where you'll sleep."

In the sitting-room Colonel Barnstaple's massive figure was firmly planted in front of the fire. With head on one side, and hands behind his back, he was gazing at the ceiling with a fatuously pleased expression. Torquil almost tottered into the room, found his way to the settee which for once was free of hounds, and with a thankful sigh fell full length along it, his head on one end, his feet on the other.

Immediately the Colonel was at him. "My dear chap! My very dear chap! You've missed the experience of a lifetime!"

Torquil had closed his eyes wearily, but this astonishing assertion caused him to open one of them slightly for a second and peer at the Colonel. "Have I?"

"You have, indeed! While you've been messing about in boats, a new page has been written in Natural History!" Torquil began to doze. "I've sent a letter to the 'Field' already! Wait till old Tiger Bloomfield hears about this! He'll have a blue fit!"

Tiger Bloomfield was apparently some rival in the art of falconry. Torquil came out of his doze with a start. "Fit? About what?"

"Torquil, of course!"

"You got him back?"

The Colonel was beside himself with excitement. "Aha! Wait till you hear! There he was up at the warren and he came to the Lure like a lamb . . . like a hawk, I mean! Then the gillie suggested a hunt for this fox that's been killing the lambs. So we went off up the Teallach and . . . by Gad! . . . we saw the fox! And . . . by Jimmy Christmas, he caught it!"

Torquil had almost gone off again. "Caught it?" he said, drowsily. "Who?"

The famous Barnstaple voice reverberated through the House.

"Torquil! Torquil the Hunter! Torquil the Foxhunter! Ha-ha! Ha-ha! *Ha-ha!* Stooped on the blighter as if he was a dashed rabbit and killed him stone dead. Here he is!" He picked up and held aloft a large dog-fox. "Twelve pounds if he's an ounce! Now, what do you say? There'll be hell to pay at the Zoological Society!"

"Wonderful!" Torquil murmured. "Where is he?"

"There!" the Colonel yelled, positively dancing with delight. "Up on the bookcase!" Electrified, Torquil sat up and looked across the room. "Isn't he a pippin? I'm going to have the mask and brush mounted for you, Torquil old boy."

He pounced over to the perch by the window. "Hi, Torquil!" (He was addressing the eagle now!) "Come on! Yoicks! Tally-ho! Loo-loo-loo! Little bitches!"

There, where the Colonel was pointing, on the top of the bookcase over the door, Torquil the Eagle was perched, a magnificent creature justifying the title of King of the Air. After a tolerant survey of his noisy colleague, he suddenly spread his great wings and glided, with a slight swishing sound, right across the room, sending a gust of air to flicker the fire. Braking expertly, he landed on the perch with perfect gentleness and accuracy, gripping the bar with his powerful talons in a way that made instantly clear the rapid demise of the fox. Torquil stared in wonder and admiration and the Colonel danced for joy.

The two Torquils regarded each other solemnly. They were not without qualities in common.

In Catriona's room Joan had been put to bed with a hot drink. Wearing one of Catriona's night-gowns and a thick shawl about her

head and shoulders, she looked considerably chastened. Her mind was in utter confusion, veering from a terrible sense of guilt at all the trouble she had caused, to the same problem that had worried every waking hour since she had met Torquil Macneil.

She knew that Torquil was in love with her and strongly suspected that she was in love with him. But many years of determined thinking in one direction cannot be forgotten in a few days, and Joan still had some small belief left in the necessity of being among the favoured ones in a world that, so far as she could see, set its standards by money and power. This philosophy had been severely shaken by these people she had met in this tiny corner of the world, who had neither of those things and yet seemed a great deal happier and truer to themselves than anyone she had known before. For that matter, she was not sure that it was true to say that Torquil had not power. He certainly enjoyed an enormous respect, and respect can be power if you like to use it that way. But there was the point! He seemed to have no such wish, and she knew very well that it was this quality above all that made him the fine person he was.

It was impossible to avoid contrasting him with Robert, but she kept on telling herself that this was not fair to Robert, who was an older man with great gifts of organisation—a leader of men. But, there again, Torquil, too, was a leader—but one who did not choose to lead. Perhaps the difference between them was that Torquil had too much respect for his fellows to want to direct their lives for them. Others would call it lack of ambition, she would have called it that herself a week ago, but it was absurd, and somehow in bad taste, to talk of ambition among these people—Torquil, who was a worthy descendant of rulers; Catriona Maclaine and Rebecca Crozier, who certainly had the clearest set of values it would be possible to find; old Ruairidh Mor, who knew his duty and could not be bribed with money; even little Bridie, who knew what loving really meant. Not to mention that genial fanatic, the Colonel, happy to have written a new page in the book of Natural History!

She sighed deeply and looked across at Catriona who was making up the fire for the night. What was Catriona thinking of her? Could she have any other opinion than that she was housing a scatterbrained and ignorant city girl who couldn't even make her mind up clearly to be a fortune hunter? That was an unfair assessment of her, she knew, but could anyone be blamed for holding it?

Catriona came over and examined the oil-lamp by the bedside. Joan looked up at her. "I'm such a fool," she said.

Those strange eyes met hers. "No you aren't. You're only doing the wrong thing for the right reason."

And then Joan saw that there was only one thing that was keeping her to her contract with Robert—the fact that it *was* a contract, that she had said she would marry him, and that Robert was waiting for her. After all her heart-searchings it was as simple as that. And Catriona had seen it!

"Do you think it's wrong?" she asked, earnestly.

Catriona nodded.

"But you think I'm right?"

But that was further than Catriona was prepared to go. "What I think is neither here nor there," she said, briskly. "Now go to sleep."

"All right, Catriona. Thank you."

"And if you count the beams your prayers will come true."

Joan shook her head. "I'm not praying to-night."

Catriona turned out the lamp and left her alone. The firelight made flickering shadows about the room. Joan's eyes, too heavy now for further service, closed droopingly. A great, swimming tiredness swept over her. She slipped deeper down into the soft bed and was lulled gently into sleep.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE first one up the next morning was Colonel Barnstaple. Soon after it was light he was out with his eagle, giving it exercise and incidentally getting a great deal more himself.

Erraig was bathed in sunlight. There was not a trace of a wind, and the sea was calm and beautiful. Kiloran, just across the way, resembled a blissful island in the South Seas.

Joan had breakfast in bed. Her long sleep had put her completely to rights again, and there were no ill effects from the ordeal she had been through. She dressed herself simply in a black, pleated skirt and a thick, dark grey sweater. When she came down to the sitting-room Torquil was sitting on the edge of the table, swinging his legs aimlessly and staring out of the window. The deer hounds occupied all the chairs. On the wall the map of Kiloran reminded them both of what had brought them together. Joan noticed at once that Torquil was in his naval uniform.

They exchanged a formal greeting and then an awkward silence fell upon them. Joan strolled about the room, touching this and that, and wishing he would say something. Unable to endure the silence any longer, she said casually: "I can't do anything with my hair."

As he still did not speak she added: "I wonder what happened to my wedding dress."

"A mermaid will marry in it," he said, in the same casual, unemotional tone.

"How is Kenny this morning?"

"Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He's working with Ruairidh on the boat."

With still greater casualness, Joan asked: "And who's for Kiloran?"

"Not the Colonel . . . he's got his eagle back. Not Kiloran, his leave is nearly up. The only passengers I can see are . . . three pipers!"

They both knew that there was sufficient of his leave left to be worth spending on the island if he had wished to do so, and they both knew that he had deliberately avoided asking whether she was for Kiloran.

"Is the boat coming?"

He looked out of the window. A fast motor-boat, very smart and expensive, was heading for Erraig from Kiloran. It was still a mile or two away.

"Yes. It's coming."

Joan joined him at the window. "Well . . . I must go down and meet him . . ."

There was something of a question in the remark, a wish for him to tell her what to do. But Torquil had lain awake many hours thinking about this moment, and he had come to the conclusion that he could do nothing more to change her mind. She could be in no doubt that he loved her, so the decision must rest with her. His independence and dignity would not permit him to beg, and besides unless she made a free decision there was a danger that she would regret later. He had no great hope that she would decide in his favour and was prepared for the worst.

Now he permitted himself a little bitter comment.

"Always the little lady, doing the right thing . . ."

"I'm sorry," she said, pathetically, "but I can't change myself."

"You're all right as you are," he said, gently.

Picking up his hat and bags, he went over to the door and called Catriona. Joan pulled on an old mackintosh that had been lent her. Catriona appeared and glanced curiously from one to the other.

"So long, Mrs. Potts," Torquil said. "I'm for the bus." He kissed her affectionately.

"Good-bye, Catriona," Joan said. "Thank you for everything."

She gave her a grateful look. Catriona smiled, rather sadly, for Torquil was not looking as happy as she would have wished.

They went out together, through the yard, under the archway and up to the path. Not a word was spoken until they reached Erraig Road, the parting of their ways. There they faced one another.

"Will you do something for me?" Torquil asked.

"It depends."

"I don't care when or where . . . but sometime, somewhere . . . will you have the pipers play 'My Nut-brown Maiden'?"

"It might be done," she answered. "Now will you do something for me before I go?"

"It depends," Torquil echoed.

"I want you to kiss me," she said.

He stepped quickly up to her. It was a long kiss from which she made no attempt to break away. But at last he released her. She turned and walked down the hill. Torquil picked up his bags and began to climb in the opposite direction.

The trees lining the road threw lovely criss-cross shadow-patterns at his feet but Torquil did not see them. Once he looked back. Joan

was going on down without a backward glance. So that was that. He had lost, and what had life to offer now? Automatically, and without seeing, he passed the telephone box and the waterfall. When he looked back again, the trees hid everything, even the sea.

When he got back to his ship people would ask if he had enjoyed his leave. Well, he supposed he had. Miserable as he felt now, he could not wish that he had never met her. His life would never be the same again, but that was as much due to having known and loved Joan Webster as to having lost her.

He came to Moy Castle and had almost passed it when he stopped, stared across at the bare, gaunt walls, and made a momentous decision. Turning back he went up to the stone steps, hesitated only a second before mounting them, and pushed at the great, moss-covered door. It creaked open on its rusty hinges.

Inside, the darkness was only broken by the narrow beams of sharp light which forced their way through the embrasured loop-holes. It was quite still, except for the faint babble of the spring that ran into the well in the centre of the Keep.

He stood just inside the door and, putting his hands to his mouth, called in ringing tones: "Catriona Maclaine! Here is Macneil of Kiloran!"

The words echoed around the stark walls. He crossed the rough floor where horses and cattle had been stabled in mediæval times, where fires had roared and smoky torches flared. It was hard to believe in all that activity now. Death seemed to have claimed Moy Castle from that moment when an ancestor of his had wreaked such a terrible and savage vengeance.

There was a stone staircase in the opposite wall. Slowly Torquil mounted it, step by step, while he seemed to hear the voice of his old nurse, intoning the awful Curse of the Maclaines. Every step had significance for him, so that he must feel his way cautiously and a litttle fearfully. Reaching the top of the flight at last, he came out into the long banqueting-hall. Here the loop-holes were bigger, and more sunlight explored the bareness. Looking about him he saw what he knew to be the door to the dungeon. Pushing it resolutely open he walked slowly down a narrow passage and came into the place where a Macneil had committed a great crime.

At his feet was the well where the couple had died—crying for mercy and at last cursing in the agony of death. There was no coping to this horrible well, just a hole in the flagging of the floor and inside it a rounded stone on which they had stood, with water all around, enough water to drown two lovers. Torquil lit a match and dropped it in. With a splutter it was extinguished.

He turned away and went back the way he had come. But he did not leave Moy Castle. Instead, he went on, climbing the spiral staircase that led to the battlements, the place where the Curse was recorded. The higher he went the lighter it became until he came out on the ivy-covered top of Moy, out into the sunshine. Grass had sprung up on the stone floor, and here and there some ferns. The

broken battlements were outlined against the blue and white of the sky.

Climbing to the topmost point Torquil stared out to the west. There was Kiloran and there was the speck of the motor-boat heading back to Kiloran. He turned and walked round the battlements, searching for the Stone.

It was half-covered in ivy which he had to push aside to read it. It was a terrible strong Curse! He shook his head as he read it and stood for several long minutes re-reading it and remembering the tremor in his old nurse's voice when she had recited it to him as a boy. This was a solemn moment for a Macneil, a moment that had never occurred in the life of his father, or his grandfather, or his great grandfather, or his great, great grandfather . . .

He shook his head again. Very distantly, from far, far away, he began to hear the sound of the pipers playing. Standing quite still he listened intently. Was it from this world, or another? Was it the first manifestation of the Curse? The pipes grew louder and his heart began to beat fast . . . faster! Ever louder and louder . . . And, yes, they were of this world! More! They were coming up the hill!

He swung round and made a leap for the battlements on the west side, scrambling up the walls and staring breathlessly down. Eighty feet below him the three pipers of the Ceilidh came marching in imposing array through the trees. They were playing "My Nut-brown Maiden."

He watched them feverishly, with a hope that he dared not express, and then, some twenty yards behind them, out of the trees came Joan! In the old mackintosh, her arms swinging gaily at her sides, she strode out vigorously, with the most carefree, challenging gait imaginable. Torquil waved his arms madly.

"Hi!"

She looked up, her face radiant.

"Hi!" she yelled back.

Then she turned off the road, as the pipers went marching on to eternity, and began to run, up the grass steps, through the door and out of his sight. With a leap Torquil rushed for the staircase. Down he hurtled at danger to life and limb! Up she came tumbling, breathless and seeking!

They met in the banqueting-hall and, in the semi-darkness, flew into each other's arms.

"I was lying to you!" Joan gasped, half laughing, half crying. "I'd rather swim in the sea than in a swimming-pool!"

"I know," he said, his face in the soft curls of her head.

"And I'd rather catch a salmon in my own river, if somebody would teach me how!"

"I know. I know!"

Their arms about each other, they crossed the Keep, lit by the light from the open door.

"And I'd rather go to Kiloran in Ruairidh Mor's boat, after all the hell I've raised."

They stopped for a moment in the doorway, silhouetted against the bright light.

"I was lying, too. I'm not really afraid of the Curse."

"I know."

He swung the door and it clanged to behind them . . .

Up on the battlements the Stone still recorded the terrible strong Curse:

> This is the Curse of Catriona Maclaine of Erraig. My curse on Macneil of Kiloran and every Macneil after him if he shall ever cross the threshold of Moy. Never shall he leave it a free man. He shall be chained to a woman to the end of his days and he shall die in his chains.

Joan and Torquil strode gaily on, hand in hand, with the Curse upon them.

Death seemed to have claimed Moy Castle.

" my Curse on Macneil of Kiloran ! "

FACTS ABOUT THE FILM

Following the same formula that they used in *49th Parallel* and *A Canterbury Tale*, Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger first laid the foundations of the story of "*I Know Where I'm Going!*" and then went out to find a setting in which to build it, believing that a film should reflect the character of the people and country in which it is set.

* * * * *

They needed a tiny inhabited island that remained visible from the mainland even when completely inaccessible during bad weather, conditions that could only be fulfilled off the Scottish coast. So they visited the Western Isles, "the Highlands in miniature", and searched for 2,000 miles, visiting lovely islands with such enchanting names as Rum, Eigg, Islay, Jura and Tiree, until at last they came to Carsaig on the Isle of Mull. There, beyond a terrifying rock-face with a sheer drop into the sea, they saw the island of Colonsay, lying beyond Carsaig Bay. They renamed the island "Kiloran" and returned to finish the script.

* * * * *

Enormous castles in remote places are as much a part of the Highlands as wild deer. Three of Mull's castles are depicted in the film—Moy Castle, Torosay Castle (renamed Achnacroish) and Duart Castle. Exact reproductions of the interior of Duart were built at Denham Studios as the setting for the English Family Robinson in the film. The oldest and most romantic, Moy Castle, was actually the scene of a feud between the clans of Maclean and Macneil.

* * * * *

The greater part of the magnificent storm sequence was made in waters that are charted by the British Navy as un-navigable. The location was the famous and dangerous whirlpool of Corryvreckan which lies between the islands of Scarba and Jura off the Argyllshire coast. The straits are especially dangerous to small craft. Michael Powell and the crew made the trip three times in *The Islander*, a three-and-a-half ton thirty-footer which was skippered by her owner, Mr. Ian Mackenzie of Iona. Wendy Hiller maintains that only very hot baths and real Highland whisky saved her life after this almost too thrilling location.

* * * * *

Much local talent was used, especially in the Ceilidh, and Sir Hugh Roberton came from Glasgow for the occasion with twelve members of the Orpheus Choir. In addition to giving beautiful renderings of well-known Scottish songs the choir also took part in the dancing of reels and schottisches to the music of three kilted pipers from the Scots Guards.

ROGER LIVESEY

DISTINGUISHED member of a famous acting family, Roger Livesey was born at Barry, South Wales in 1906. Trained for the stage by Italia Conti he has played a large number and variety of parts, beginning in 1917 with his first appearance as the Office Boy in *Loyalty*. In 1926 he toured South Africa and the West Indies with Florence Glossop-Harris, and later went on a Canadian tour in which he was engaged in repertory—three nights in each town and a different play every night! He has described the nightmare of having to learn a new part every twenty-four hours. After the evening's show was over he would pace the streets learning his next part, so tired that he knew that if he did it at home he would fall asleep. Only the walking kept him awake, but even this failed once and he fell exhausted upon a slag-heap, where he was found by a friendly policeman who advised him to get some real sleep in his own bed.

Roger's first New York appearance was in 1936 at the Henry Miller Theatre as Mr. Horner in Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, after which he turned to the screen, achieving an overwhelming success with his portrayal of the name part in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*. This film, which had world-wide distribution, established him as an international star.

Most of the War years have been spent in touring Army camps and industrial areas with his wife, Ursula Jeans. But Roger managed to fit in two West End successes: *Watch on the Rhine* and *The Banbury Nose*.

As Torquil Macneil in "*I Know Where I'm Going!*" Roger brings to the screen all the warmth, sincerity, stubbornness and magic that make up a Highlander. He has recently completed *A Matter of Life and Death*, another Powell-Pressburger film in which he plays an English country doctor who is an authority on cerebral disorders.

Now he is preparing to leave for India with his wife, to tour a series of plays which have been specially asked for by the troops there, including James Bridie's *It Depends What You Mean*.

WENDY HILLER

A MAXIMUM of fame with a minimum of performances. That suitably describes the position of Wendy Hiller when, after one play and two films, she found herself internationally famous.

Born at Bramhall, near Manchester, in August 1912 and educated at Winceby House School, Bexhill, Wendy began to study as an actress with the Manchester Repertory Company in 1930, making her first stage appearance that same year in *The Ware Case*. Five years later she achieved success overnight in the part of Sally Hardcastle in Walter Greenwood's play of working-class life *Love on the Dole*. She made her first London appearance in this play at the Garrick Theatre, and repeated this success in her first and only visit to America when, in 1936, the play was staged at the Shubert Theatre in New York.

Turning to the screen she won instant recognition in the film versions of two plays by George Bernard Shaw. In *Pygmalion* she took the leading feminine role of Eliza Doolittle, the flowerseller who was groomed for a place in society and who used the famous expletive that has always been the highlight of the story on stage or screen. The title role in *Major Barbara* followed, when she played a Salvation Army lass opposite Rex Harrison.

Recently she has had a historical part in Norman Ginsbury's play *The First Gentleman* at the Savoy Theatre, London.

Eight years ago Wendy married Walter Gow, the dramatic author. They have two children, Ann, born in 1940 and Anthony Hiller, born in 1942. She has interesting views on the feminine problem of Home versus Career, believing it impossible to make a success of both all the time, which may account for her rare appearances. Home life and babies call for infinitely greater initiative and energy than acting, she says. "At the studio the director is there to tell me what to do and when. All big problems are solved for me. At home I have to think for myself."

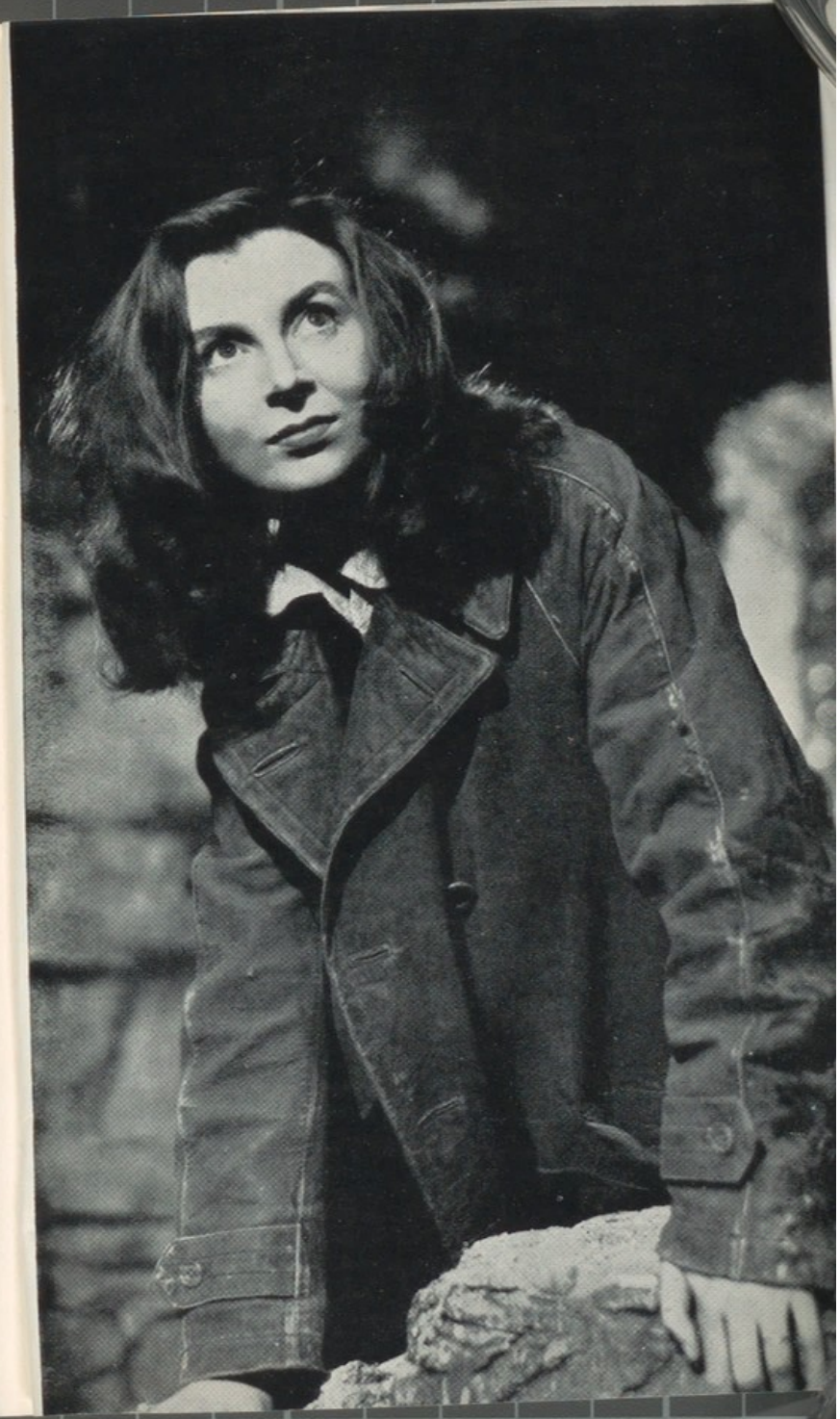
Passionately fond of gardening, Wendy was an ardent window-boxer when she lived in London. Now she has a large garden at her Beaconsfield home which she tends herself. Her speciality is growing vegetables for the children, especially spinach.

PAMELA BROWN

SCHOOLED, as so many good actresses have been, in repertory, Pamela Brown won for herself a high reputation as a stage actress. She was "discovered" by the famous dramatic critic, James Agate, when she was playing in *Hedda Gabler* at the Oxford Playhouse. More recent appearances have been in *Claudia* and in *Madeleine*, and her greatest personal success was as Ophelia in Robert Helpmann's outstanding production of *Hamlet*.

Her greatest ambition is said to be to play the tragic leading role in *La Dame aux Camelias*. Hearing of this, James Agate wrote her a long letter in his column in the *Sunday Times*, urging her to abandon the project as unsuited to her especial talents! Whether she took his advice to heart is not known but she has not yet played the part.

"*I Know Where I'm Going!*" is only her second film, the first being an earlier Powell-Pressburger production *One of Our Aircraft is Missing*. She brings a rare and strange quality to the part of Catriona Maclaine, descendant of the murdered girl who placed the Curse upon the Macneils.



CAPTAIN KNIGHT AND MR. RAMSHAW

CAPTAIN C. W. R. KNIGHT, M.C., F.R.P.S., F.Z.S., and his famous Golden Eagle, Mr. Ramshaw, have long been associated with films, but until recently only short educational ones for use on their wide lecture tours. Then came the time when Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger were planning to make a feature film on the Hebridean Island of Mull, and somehow Captain Knight and that intrepid Highlander Mr. Ramshaw found their way into the script. There was no mistaking either of them, although Captain Knight had arrived incognito as "Colonel Barnstaple" and Mr. Ramshaw was travelling modestly as a "trained eagle".

To a seasoned traveller like Mr. Ramshaw a modest journey to Mull was a mere bagatelle and, apart from relieving the island of a few chickens, which proved too great a temptation, his days there passed happily enough. For Captain Knight, however, who has travelled thousands of miles to face vast audiences in many countries, the island held one overwhelming terror—the camera! He admits quite frankly that the first days of his screen career left him wan with fright.

His portrayal of Colonel Barnstaple is truly a portrait of himself, a flamboyant character with the roar of a lion and a heart full of humour and kindly wisdom. His pride in Mr. Ramshaw's prowess and concern for his safety are not screen fiction. For sixteen years Captain Knight and Mr. Ramshaw have been partners and during that time Mr. Ramshaw has learned to fly freely not only in the open air but in crowded theatres or private drawing rooms, to the public delight but not danger. At his trainer's call he returns to a well-protected arm more tamely than a homing pigeon.

In spite of this achievement it must not be supposed that life with Mr. Ramshaw is uneventful. He has his moments of temperament and has been known to break away from his daily routine and assert his independence. During one visit to America he pulverised New York by leaving his home on the Gotham Hotel rooftop and flying at large. Although press reporters foretold a grim fate for any succulent young children who caught this "wild" eagle's eye, he surveyed the city quietly and without fuss until a police officer saw fit to return him to his owner.

Mr. Ramshaw's experiences are legion. He has visited South Africa twice, crossed the Atlantic eighteen times, has been torpedoed once, was in France with the B.E.F. at the beginning of the War, and has raffled his feathers for Victory!

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